The Forgotten El Salvador:
A Study of the Emergence and Downfall
of the "Bright Spot" of Central America, 1948-1978

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Pedro F Quijada

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Patrick McNamara
Adviser

May 2021

Acknowledgements

I have been able to conduct this study thanks to the invaluable support of my adviser, Dr. Patrick McNamara, who has given me encouragement, guidance, and the independence necessary for this kind of research. In addition to being open minded about this project, he has also invested his time reading, correcting, and providing suggestions that have improved significantly the quality of this dissertation. I also want to thank him because, besides his academic assistance, he has treated me as a friend and provided his supporting company in difficult as well as in good times. He has believed in my potential as scholar and educator, and has nurtured my aspirations with advice, moral support, and patience.

I want to thank the members of my committee, Dr. Sarah Chambers, Dr. Elaine Tyler May, Dr. MJ Maynes, and Dr. David Orique. Thank you for helping me to improve my dissertation and also for the valuable lessons I learned in your courses and that I believe are reflected in this study. Throughout this process I have always kept in mind Dr. Chambers' standards of excellence, and I feel that this has helped me to document my statements carefully and to keep them as objective as possible. Her suggestions helped me bring more balance to the study and to make more visible key arguments for this and for future works. I am also grateful for her very active role as chair of my committee, making the process go swimmingly. My experience with Dr. May in the Department of American Studies provided me with the initial ideas and the necessary confidence to explore and write about the cultural aspects of El Salvador during the studied period. The lessons learned in Dr. MJ Mayne's course on interrogating the archive were very influential in my decision to take into account the various sources that are non-traditional

but that still provide valid and strong support for my arguments. Fr. Orique not only has given me his friendship since the first days I arrived to my new home in Rhode Island, but has also provided me with various opportunities to continue participating in academic life while writing my dissertation—these opportunities, in turn, have led me to a better understanding of the role of the Church in the socio-political life of El Salvador during the decade of the 1970s. The moral support that he gave me and my family during times of trouble, however, is truly priceless for me.

I also want to express my appreciation for their kind help to Dr. Lary May from the Department of American Studies, who administered my comparative area's preliminary examination, to Dr. Noro Andriamanalina from the Office for Diversity in Graduate Education, who supported me with travel funds to present my research abroad and was always attentive about my academic progress and well-being, and to Rafael Tarrago, our Librarian for History and Iberian, Ibero-American & Chicano/Latino Studies, who was constantly alert about the needs of the Latin Americanists, supporting us in our projects, generating opportunities to present our work, and even pointing at possibilities for publication. My appreciation goes as well to Dr. Bianet Castellanos, Dr. Jeffrey Pilcher, and Dr. Angélica Afanador-Pujol, who were members of my Preliminary Committee—thank you for supporting me during this project's takeoff.

I was able to conduct research in El Salvador thanks to the financial support given by the Department of History of the University of Minnesota, who awarded me a Graduate Research Partnership Program Fellowship in 2013 and a Department of History Fellowship in 2014. These resources were fundamental to travel to El Salvador to explore

various archives and conduct interviews. I'd like to express my gratitude to all those who made these grants possible.

The completion of this study has also been possible thanks to many other people who helped me in various ways. To attain a wider idea of what every-day-life was like in El Salvador during the studied years I conducted both formal and informal interviews. Those who helped me with formal interviews include Irma Escobar, Teresa Rodríguez, Julio A. Iraheta, and the late Lorenzo Castro, Dagoberto Reyes, and Pedro Quijada Laínez. I'd like to thank particularly Mr. Julio A. Iraheta with whom I have been consulting from the start until the end of this project. Throughout the past six years he has always been available and willing to verify or correct my understanding of the studied times and events. His insight, thus, has been invaluable. Those who helped me with informal interviews include Janet Urquilla, Ramón Rivera, Ana Josefa Iraheta de Rosales, Pedro Jinjaume, Cecilia Molina, Edmundo Salguero, Silvia de Orellana, Inocencio Alas, and the late María Rivera and Carlos Rosales.

I also want to thank the help given by the kind staff of the various archives I visited in El Salvador. Particularly, I want to express my gratitude to Vilma Rivera de Pérez from the Florentino Idoate Library at the UCA, who went beyond her duties to help me have access to the sources I needed. To Oscar Antonio Campos Lara and Gerardo Monterrosa Cubías from the Archivo General de la Nación—Monterrosa Cubías not only shared his own research about the 1950s, but also directed me to key sources in other archives. To the staff of the Academia Salvadoreña de la Lengua e Historia and of the Museo y Biblioteca of the Banco Central de Reserva de El Salvador, my thanks for their kind attention.

Graduate Studies generate tremendous amounts of stress, and I want to recognize the help that friends and colleagues provide to survive that and other difficulties. From the University of Minnesota Twin Cities I'd like to thank Luz María Ramírez Hernández, Paula Cuellar, Ketaki Jaywat, Molly Leonard, Emily Bruce, Ruchen Gao, Nathan Weaver Olson, Heider Tun, Virgil Slade, and Elliot James. From the University of Minnesota Morris, I'd like to thank Windy Gonzalez Roberts, Stacey Parker Aronson, Donna Chollett, and Lisandra Sperr. Thank you all for being there.

I want to thank the support from my family. First I want to express my gratitude to my late father, Pedro Quijada, who was the first person who spoke to me about the positive aspects of the history of El Salvador. To my mother, Maria Quijada, always there for anything her son might need. She has been the major provider of "private fellowships" that funded this research. My debt to her is unpayable, and I only hope that this achievement of mine makes her proud, as it is also her achievement. To my sister, Mercedes, the angel that keeps my mother alive and well.

I'd like to thank specially my wife, Dr. Ana Cecilia Iraheta, the best companion I could ever have in this journey called life. There is no amount or type of words that could truly express the gratitude I feel for the unconditional support and love that she has always given me. This academic milestone will add to the commemoration of a more personal one: our twentieth anniversary, which falls also in this May. Finally, I want to thank my son Benjamín Alejandro, my little sun, for being my inspiration and my source of energy. Thank you for coming to my life. You are now my reason to exist.

Dedication

To my son, Benjamín Alejandro Iraheta

May this study help you connect with your roots

To my late father, Pedro Quijada Laínez

Thank you for helping me discover my good roots

Abstract

In this study I examine the history of El Salvador during the years 1948 to 1978. Current narratives regard this period as part of a sequence of oppression and underdevelopment under military rule that existed in this nation since the early decades of the twentieth century and that eventually led the people to erupt in civil war in the 1980s. In this study I re-examine the above period and consequentially offer an alternative narrative.

I demonstrate that, during the years in question, the government embarked on a series of national reconfiguration projects that brought significant industrial and economic development, political stability, and improvements in social programs. The impact of these projects is demonstrated by a body of accounts written by journalists and other researchers who, at the time, praised the ongoing projects and referred to El Salvador as a progressive nation and, as quoted in the title, as a "bright spot" in the Central American isthmus.

This study is mainly based on print primary sources. It is also supplemented by other sources such as contemporary memoirs, economic statistics, oral histories, music and films. The findings made through oral history interviews, it should be noted, were what led me to the print sources that now form the basis of the study. This work reinterprets previous analyses that have asserted an inaccurate view El Salvador's entire twentieth-century history. It shows 1948-1978 as a period with socio-economic features distinct from previous and posterior years.

Table of Contents

List of Acronyms

AGEUS	Asociación General de Estudiantes Universitarios
ANDA	Administración Nacional de Acueductos y Alcantarillados
ANDES	Asociación Nacional de Educadores Salvadoreños
ANEP	Asociación Nacional de la Empresa Privada
ANTEL	Administración Nacional de Telecomunicaciones
ASI	Asociación Salvadoreña de Industriales
CEL	Comisión Ejecutiva Hidroelectrica Del Río Lempa
DICESA	Discos Centroamericanos
ERP	Ejercito Revolucionario del Pueblo
FMLN	Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional
FPL	Fuerzas Populares de Liberación
FSV	Fondo Social para la Vivienda
INSAFI	Instituto Salvadoreño de Fomento Industrial
INSAFOP	Instituto Salvadoreño de Fomento de la Producción
IRA	Instituto Regulador de Abastecimientos
ITV	Instructional Television
IUSA	Industrias Unidas Sociedad Anónima
IVU	Instituto de Vivienda Urbana
ODECA	Organización de Estados Centroamericanos
PAR	Partido de Acción Renovadora
PCN	Partido de Conciliación Nacional
PDC	Partido Democrata Cristiano
PRUD	Partido Revolucionario de Unificación Democratica
TIEL	Texas Instruments El Salvador
UCA	Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas
UES	Universidad Nacional de El Salvador

List of Tables

List of Figures

Introduction

Overview and Thesis

In this study I examine the history of El Salvador from 1948 to 1978. During these years the country was portrayed in the media as a modern, industrialized, and prosperous nation. For example, in 1967 the *Chicago Tribune* referred to El Salvador as "the most industrialized, and most prosperous of the Central American Republics."[1] Praeger Publishers, a company that specialized in reference works for the academic, business, and government communities, issued a book titled *Rapid Development in Small Economies: The Example of El Salvador* (1967). As the title suggests, El Salvador's economic reforms were praised to the point of being presented as an example for other small economies/nations.[2] The *Journal of Politics* also portrayed El Salvador as a country undergoing a successful process of political development, which was evidenced by "the shift in behavior of the political leadership and the increase in individual participation in the electoral process."[3]

These claims of relative prosperity, which appeared in a variety of media outlets, were also supported by the economic statistics of the times. Per capita GDP, for example, grew beginning in 1950 at a steady pace, reaching its highest level of $3,137 in 1978. This figure, which was higher than that of Bolivia, Thailand, and several other larger

[1] Barry Bishop, "El Salvador: Giant Among Latin Minis," *Chicago Tribune*, October 13, 1967, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.
[2] David R. Raynolds, *Rapid Development in Small Economies: The Example of El Salvador* (New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1967).
[3] Ronald H. McDonald, "Electoral Behavior and Political Development in El Salvador," *The Journal of Politics* 31, no.2 (1969): 397-399, http://www.jstor.org/stable/2128602.

countries, fell the following year and was not reached again until thirty-four years later, in 2012.[4]

This picture of success, however, is not how El Salvador is nowadays remembered. In general terms, El Salvador is presented as a poor and under-developed nation that has chronically suffered from the lack of democracy and excess authoritarianism. This general negative image has strong support. Most of the studies that compose the readily available body of knowledge about El Salvador have examined themes and events such as the weak agricultural foundations on which the Salvadoran government based the country's economy since the nineteenth century, the culture of violence that the oligarchy and the military have historically imposed on the working classes, the erosion and almost disappearance of indigenous identity as a result of the massacre of around thirty thousand indigenous peasants by the repressive government of General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez in 1932, the "Soccer War" between El Salvador and Honduras in 1969, and the human rights violations and atrocities committed during the country's armed conflict of the 1980s.

This body of knowledge is the result of attempts to explain the outbreak of violence in El Salvador during the civil war, which lasted from 1980 to 1992. From the late 1970s, when political upheaval was already claiming victims, and as the conflict

[4] GDP per capita (gross domestic product divided by midyear population) is an indicator of productivity and economic development. It is also one of the three indicators (along with life expectancy and education) of the Human Development Index—a measuring system designed under the United Nations Development Programme to examine human progress. The GDP per capita figures are given in U.S. dollars at constant 2010 prices (which are the most recent calculations available). The source for these figures is the World Development Indicators database of the World Bank, accessed July 6, 2018, http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators. The reference to the statement about GDP per capita progress since 1950 is found in: Alvaro Trigueros, "El crecimiento económico en El Salvador de 1950 a 1996," *Realidad. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 61 (1998):33-44. The 1978 GDP per capita numbers from Bolivia and Thailand were $1,741. and $1,321, respectively. El Salvador's GDP per capita in 2012 was $3,165.

intensified in the 1980s, journalists, scholars and other observers wrote and published about El Salvador in unprecedented numbers. Some of the first news-stories and academic works eventually became essential references about the country and established basic premises that would be observed by future researchers.[5] As the body of literature grew, a particular discourse from this literature emerged, and the image for which El Salvador is currently known began to take a hold among academics as well as in the popular imagination. The power of this discourse has shaped current views of the country, and has also discouraged alternative interpretations. Pre-1980s news-stories, journal articles, books, dissertations, films, travel guides, business reports, economic statistics and other publications have disappeared from the contemporary reader's field of view, and when they occasionally surface, are quickly dismissed as stories of things that did not really happen or of vain and failed projects that did not bring actual benefits to the nation.

Still, pre-civil war sources and views about El Salvador exist, and the contradictions that arise when comparing them to the dominant literature of today generate questions and opportunities for research. The overarching question that emerges from the conflicting views is whether El Salvador has experienced, at any point in its history, anything other than socio-economic underdevelopment and oppression of the working classes. In this study, I argue that El Salvador did in fact experience a time of

[5] In the academic space, the first essential post-1980 study was Enrique A. Baylora's *El Salvador in Transition*, published in 1982. This book is the first academic work that bundles together the pre-1980s history of the country as one continuous sequence of oppression of the working classes by the coffee oligarchs and the military. A news-report that eventually became a book and also an essential reference about El Salvador was that of New York Time's journalist Raymond Bonner, who in 1981 published a story about the massacre of over seven hundred civilians in the town of El Mozote. Both Baylora's book and the news-report about El Mozote are examined in detail in Chapter One.

socioeconomic prosperity and did so from 1948 to 1978.[6] I support this argument by re-examining the body of pre-1980 sources that are under-studied and that reveal the major socioeconomic measures that were taken by the government and the private sector during those years.

Significance

The significance of this study lies in the alternative narrative that emerges about the twentieth-century history of El Salvador. It demonstrates that the years 1948-1978 constitute a distinct period with socio-economic as well as political characteristics that differ from previous and subsequent years. In this sense, the study disrupts current narratives that have bundled together the pre-1980s history and have linked the civil war directly to the 1932 indigenous insurrection and massacre.

The study provides an alternative to the dominant views that have been representing El Salvador in the past decades. Post 1980 narratives have made old portrayals of the country disappear from the body of knowledge about this nation. This study brings back to light those old and favorable portrayals and, by doing so, attempts to bring some balance to the unintentionally asymmetrical picture that was created as a result of the 1980s armed conflict.

[6] I have chosen this beginning and ending dates because they are marked by events that are relevant to the notion of a progressive El Salvador. The initial date marks the overthrow of General Salvador Castaneda (the last leader that represented the totalitarian military regime established in 1932 by General Hernández Martínez) and the beginning of a series of socio-economic reforms that would be carried out by the following five administrations. The ending date marks the year in which El Salvador reached its highest GDP per capita in the twentieth century, an event that symbolizes the end of a period of economic growth that had started thirty years before.

Theoretical Approach

To this moment, the readily available body of social science literature about El Salvador has no works that examine the themes I am studying. Thus, the academic works that are related to and have influenced this research are about other countries. The first work, and perhaps the one that has wielded the most influence, reflects on the production of historical knowledge, and on how narratives are based upon the adoption and development of certain facts and, simultaneously, upon the suppression of others. Michel-Rolph Trouillot's, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (1995), inspires my study by exploring what is not said in historical narratives—in digging out the "silences" that, according to Trouillot, are created in the process of historical production.[7] One way he explains the existence and production of silences is through the notion of history having dual meaning. For him, history could be "what happened" or "that which is said to have happened." The first conception is where the silences usually are found, and the second is the narrative that has given voice only to certain facts, that have become dominant, and have created silences in the process.

This idea is important for my study because the period 1948 to 1978 has been lumped with previous periods in one narrative. This narrative, which in Trouillot's words would be "that which is said to have happened," holds that this period is part of the history of underdevelopment and oppression that has afflicted El Salvador since the late nineteenth century. This narrative also defines this period, ignoring any alternative view that contradicts a seamless interpretation of national history. My goal is to bring to light an alternative interpretation—a history of better days in El Salvador.

[7] Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995), 27.

My study echoes Trouillot's in that they both look at "unthinkable" or "inconceivable" events. He examines how the Haitian Revolution—arguably the most successful slave revolt in history—was removed from texts by Western historians of that period for whom such an event was inconceivable, and how that act of erasure had an impact in the stance toward the Revolution taken by future historians (Eric Hobsbawm among them) who failed to give the Revolution proper recognition for the impact it had worldwide. Just like the Haitian Revolution was "unthinkable" for the historians of that period, the notion of a prosperous El Salvador has become unthinkable or inconceivable under the powerful weight of the post-1980 narratives about this country. And therefore, like Trouillot argues for the worldwide impact of the Haitian Revolution, I argue here for the relatively healthy socioeconomic status that El Salvador once had, a status that even impacted the rest of Central America, since the country was a key leader in the formation of the Central American Common Market of the 1960s.

I am also inspired by *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (1997) by Dario A. Euraque.[8] This book offers an example of challenging dominant narratives in Central America. The book revises the history and historiography of Honduras, a country that for a very long time has been regarded as the archetype of the "banana republic," that is, a country completely dependent on foreign capital and manipulated by foreign political influence. The dominant narrative about Honduras holds—in addition to the notion that the powerful fruit companies had virtually complete control of all economic and political realms—that the country had no local oligarchy as it was the case of its neighbor nations. This absence of a powerful local

[8] Dario A. Euraque, *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

conservative elite controlling the government is in turn the reason why popular movements in the 1970s were not harshly repressed, why agreements between the popular sectors and the military leaders regarding agrarian reform were reached, and consequentially why an armed conflict was avoided in the 1980s. In sum, Honduras has been unique because of the things it lacked: a local oligarchy, and political and economic autonomy.

Euraque does not dismiss the idea of dependency. He brings, however, another perspective. Instead of focusing on what Honduras lacked, he brings to light the things that the country did have. According to Euraque, Honduras had a powerful new bourgeoisie in the city of San Pedro Sula—then the industrial capital of the country—formed by Palestinian Arab immigrants. This group was an industrial liberal elite that had a great degree of autonomy and that established a healthy relationship with their workers. The dynamics and ideology that emerged out of that relationship ultimately had a national impact: It was the measures taken in San Pedro Sula, Euraque argues, that influenced the progressive reforms taken by the military leaders in the 1970s, which in turn allowed Honduras to avoid an armed conflict in the 1980s.

Like the narrative that Honduras lacked economic and political autonomy and a local oligarchy, the narrative on El Salvador emphatically points out that before the civil war of the 1980s, El Salvador lacked democracy, and that the absence of democratic institutions was the root of all the other problems the country faced. Like Euraque, instead of focusing on what the country lacked, I examine the existence of other things, such as the methodically planned efforts to improve the nation's economy (through agricultural diversification, building of infrastructure, anti-hoarding legislation,

promotion of foreign investment—among other things), and the efforts to improve housing, health, and access to education.

The lack of democracy during the period I am studying, nevertheless, is a crucial issue that deserves attention since the lack of it represents one of the strongest foundations of the current narratives about El Salvador. A scholar whose work has helped me examine this issue is Fernando Coronil through *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela*.[9] In this study, Coronil criticizes the historical accounts that have come out after the 1970s and that have since become the dominant and "official" narratives about this country. These narratives hold that democracy and modernity arrived in Venezuela only after the end of the dictatorship of General Juan Vicente Gomez—the de facto ruler of the country from 1908 to 1935. Coronil does not argue for the existence of democracy before 1935, what he shows is that the structure of the Venezuelan (oil based) economy, and the political dynamics of the modern State were actually shaped in the years before 1935. In addition, he also shows that the dominant narrative came into existence during and after the 1970s, when the State nationalized the oil industry and embarked on grandiose modernization projects that needed the approval of the population. It was in this context that the discourse of democracy and modernity in contrast with the dictatorship and "backwardness" of the times of Gomez was conveniently developed and, eventually, became dominant.

Like Coronil on Venezuela, I do not argue for the existence of full democracy in El Salvador in the pre-civil war years. What I argue is that a set of democratic practices and institutions began to be introduced and take place during this period. Candidates to

[9] Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

public office, for example, appealed for the first time to the favor of the population, proportional representation was introduced in the Legislative Assembly, voter turnout increased consistently in each of the elections that took place throughout the period, opposition parties begun to take public service seats of national importance (the mayor of the capital city during the entire 1960s, for example, did not belong to the official party), and the working classes got involved in political activity as never before.[10] These facts are forgotten, dismissed or turned around to support the dominant perspective—a situation that could be summarized in one short statement from Coronil's study: "The persuasiveness of a historical account depends on rendering invisible the artifice of its production."[11] The examinations of these facts, also, demonstrate that although there was no democracy, the country was in a process of political development that granted the people unprecedented representation, political awareness, and ability to participate in the political processes—elements that eventually led them (from the late 1970s on) to demand democracy and fight authoritarianism in more vigorous ways.

In terms of Coronil's criticism for the origins of the dominant discourse, what my study identifies the most with are his ideas about representational practices used by Western scholars when representing developing societies. He calls these practices "Occidentalism."[12] In essence, the idea is that Western scholars, more often than not, tend to see the world divided into modern centers and backward peripheries, and that such stereotypes lead them to think that modernity cannot exists in places deemed as

[10] The mayor of San Salvador from 1964 to 1968 was José Napoleón Duarte. His party—of which he was a founding member—was the Christian Democratic Party (PDC), nowadays considered to have been a middle ground party. In the 1960's however, the PDC was seen by various sectors as left-leaning (despite the fact that the PDC, since its foundation, had publicly declared its anti-communist position) since Duarte favored redistribution of wealth and upward social mobility. His constituency as mayor of San Salvador was formed by workers of un-skilled and semi-skilled occupations and the middle-class sectors.
[11] Coronil, *The Magical State*, 3.
[12] Ibid, *xi*.

peripheral. Countries like Venezuela or El Salvador, thus, are explored from a perspective that deems them as truncated versions of the modern centers. They are of interest to the academy because of their deficits and failures, not because of their successes.[13]

These ideas, which might seem radical, could be illustrated by looking at the historiography of El Salvador. Histories of successful events are either under-studied or straight forwardly forgotten. The academy has shown only minimal interest in studying, for example, how General Hernández Martínez, one of the most cruel and genocidal dictators of Latin America, was deposed by the population through an act of non-violent resistance, or the life of Prudencia Ayala, an indigenous woman who in 1930 was directing a feminist newspaper and attempting to run for the presidency of the country.[14] In addition, and as I stated at the beginning of this section, there are no social science works dedicated to examine themes like economic progress or industrialization in El

[13] The conception of the world divided into cores and peripheries could be found, for instance, among academics who study coffee. Jonhn M. Talbot, for example, published in 1997 an article about instant coffee in Latin America in which he said "A tropical product, coffee is grown only in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries but is consumed mainly in the core… Thus world trade in coffee has traditionally consisted of exporting green coffee beans from the periphery or semi-periphery to the core, where it is roasted and ground and sold to customers." See John M. Talbot, "The Struggle for Control of a Commodity Chain: Instant Coffee from Latin America," *Latin American Research Review* 32, no. 2 (1997):119, https://www.jstor.org/stable/2503869. Other academics who use these concepts include Stephan Haggar in *Pathways from the Periphery: The Politics of Growth in the Newly Industrialized Countries* (1990), and Gary Gerefi and Miguel Corzeniewicz in "Comodity Chains and Footwear Exports in the Semiperiphery," in *Semiperipheral States in the World Economy* (1990).

[14] On May 11, 1944, General Hernández Martínez abandoned the presidential seat voluntarily after the country was paralyzed by the "Strike of Fallen Arms"—laborers, students, doctors and other professionals decided to protest his dictatorial measures simply by staying home. This action paralyzed all economic activity, and after only ten days, Hernández Martínez fled to exile. The strike reached neighboring Guatemala, where the working as well as the middle classes emulated the Salvadoran action, resulting in the overthrow of General Jorge Ubico, an authoritarian leader who had ruled that country since 1931. Prudencia Ayala directed the newspaper *Redención Femenina* (Feminist Redemption) in which she presented her political platform as presidential candidate in 1930: gender equality, support for labor unions, honesty in public administration, religious freedom, and legitimization of children born out of wedlock—among other things.

Salvador. The few instances in which the period of time I study has been explored—as I will show below—have been to analyze how and why things failed.

Nevertheless, I also believe that these representational practices that Coronil speaks about are not made with malice by the scholars who perform them. They are made as result of the influence from what is being researched in the present moment or by what has been successfully researched in the past. Therefore, the fact that the historiography of El Salvador has no works that examine the themes and subjects I study does not make the scholars who have contributed to the existing historiography conspirators against the country.[15] It only shows that what was written at the beginning of the 1980s conflict had a great impact on the content and perspectives of subsequent accounts.

Sources and methods

In this study I analyze previously under-studied primary sources regarding the socio-economic status of El Salvador within and around the years 1948 to 1978. These sources include news-stories, academic articles and books, master's theses, doctoral dissertations, government documents, bank loan documents, business related articles, presidential speeches, traveler's guides, popular magazine articles, flyers, pictures, films, and musical recordings. I also examine economic indicators such as GDP, GDP per capita, manufacturing activity, housing market, balance of trade, foreign investment, and indicators related to literacy, life expectancy, population growth, urbanization, education,

[15] I believe that, on the contrary, the creation of a body of literature that focuses on themes such as the socioeconomic origins of the armed conflict, State repression and human rights violations, has assisted the country in dealing with its past tragedies. The literature has aided activists to push for recognition of wrongdoings, assumption of responsibility, and eventual serving of justice. The translation into Spanish of Mark Danner's *Massacre at El Mozote*, for example, has certainly helped to preserve this event in the memory of different generations of Salvadorans and to demand justice. The Salvadoran State has finally officially recognized (in September, 2017) the massacre. Eighteen military leaders involved in that event and in other war crimes are facing an ongoing trial process.

and electoral turnout. These primary sources are supplemented by secondary sources such as contemporary memoirs, film documentaries, and newspaper articles that are related to the period in question.

In addition to the traditional archival/print materials I also rely on digital/online repositories of information that are not associated with any research institutions but that, nevertheless, contain relevant documents and testimonies. The Blog de Tecnología, an online section of the newspaper *La Prensa Gráfica*, for example, has an article about the history of the technology manufacturer Texas Instruments in El Salvador. This article is followed by a chain of comments from ex-workers of the plant. Some of these comments are long enough to constitute important testimonies about what was being done in the country in terms of education and industrialization in the decade of the 1970s. The Facebook page Nuestro El Salvador de Antaño, also, contains over four thousand images that document the twentieth century history of the country. Most of these images are of the pre-civil war decades.

Oral history interviews also support this study. A total of twelve interviews with six participants were conducted. They were audio recorded and carried out adhering to the General Principles for Oral History practices formulated by the Oral History Association. The format used was that of the semi-structured interview. Participants were asked what life was like before the civil war started and were left to answer that question in their own ways, with me intervening mostly to redirect the conversation to the studied time frame. Interviewees were chosen based on age, which was set at a minimum of sixty years in order to record testimonies from people who were born before or at least in the early years of the studied period. Six of these interviews were made with my late

father, Pedro Quijada. These are of particular significance because it was through them that I started to learn about aspects of El Salvador that were unknown for me, as I had been educated under the narrative that focuses on underdevelopment and lack of democracy. Although I have not used these interviews directly in the study's narrative, they are of great importance as they provided me with the initial perspectives about the studied period and led me to the print primary sources that form the bases of this work. The interviews were conducted between 2012 and 2014 in three locations: Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and San Salvador.

All of the print sources are from El Salvador, the United States and the United Kingdom. They are, thus, in both the Spanish and English languages. All translations from Spanish into English are mine. All monetary amounts are expressed in U.S dollars. The print sources from El Salvador were collected from the El Salvador General Archive, the Central Reserve Bank, the House of the Academies of Language and Histories, and the collections at the National Library of El Salvador, the University of El Salvador, the University of Central America, and at the Don Bosco University. Several political flyers, local newspapers, magazines, postcards, and other print materials were provided by private individuals who were kind enough to open their family "treasures chests" in order to help me with this study. English language sources in print and microfilm format were obtained from several collections through the Inter Library Loan system at the University of Minnesota. The statistical figures and other quantitative information come from the Central Reserve Bank of El Salvador and from the World Development Indicators database and the digital archive of Documents and Reports of the World Bank.

The analysis of all these sources is done in three chapters in which I re-examine the socioeconomic activity that took place in each of the three decades (with some overlap) of the period in question. In each chapter I present the reform projects that were carried out during that decade and analyze the impact that they had on Salvadoran society and culture.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter One I begin by presenting the readily available body of knowledge about El Salvador. I show how most of the studies and ideas about this country were developed after the interest that the civil war of the 1980s generated among journalists, scholars and other researchers. In a quest to explain the origins of the civil war, researchers began to trace the roots of the socio-economic problems that triggered the conflict. In this process they created a premise about the country: El Salvador is a country that has, since its early history, been plagued by problems such as weak economic foundations, an ineffective political system that allowed for wealth to concentrate in the hands of a few, peasant land dispossession, and repression as means of social control. All these problems, the premise holds, gradually created the conditions of inequality that finally led to the armed conflict in 1980. I review works of journalism, social sciences, literature, films, and music and explore how they all share a similar perspective that, although it is undeniably true, it has not allowed for the examination of alternative views that could help portray a more complex and complete picture of the country—which is what I do in the subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Two start the actual task of re-exploring the 1948-1978 period. First, I present a brief account of the events that led to the Revolution of 1948—the event that ushered in the period I am studying. After this I proceed to examine the socioeconomic reforms that were carried out in the decade of the 1950s. I look at significant political reforms, at the government's efforts to seek expert technical advice to assess the developmental needs of the country, at its beginning steps carrying out projects for diversification of the economy, at the creation of social programs, and at the first plans to create a common market in the Central American area.

In Chapter Three I examine the 1960s. Several milestones were achieved in this decade. The economy was diversified and coffee was no longer the only export. By the mid-1960s, coffee accounted for only fifty percent of all exports, and cotton for twenty percent.[16] The country was also producing and exporting sugar, corn, and industrial products. The Central American Common Market was created and El Salvador became one of its leaders and main beneficiaries. Proportional representation was introduced to the Legislative Assembly and the first labor code in the country's history was passed. The 1960s was also the decade of the Alliance for Progress, a project of the Kennedy administration that aimed at helping developing countries in order to steer them away from Soviet influence. El Salvador took full advantage of that program to improve its already going economic and social projects. In this decade the government also undertook a major program of educational reform that expanded the years of free and compulsory education, re-organized the curriculum in order to create a skilled labor force for the emerging industrial sector, and introduced an Instructional Television program

[16] In previous years, coffee, the main cash-crop and pillar of the economy, amounted to 85-90% of exports.

that supplemented the work of classroom teachers and that grew in coverage and content in the following decade.

In this chapter I also examine how the socioeconomic activities of the 1960s had a great impact in the cultural arena. The opening of the country's economy to foreign investment, the arrival of the Alliance for Progress, and the country's leading role in the Central American Market, for example, created the conditions for social mobility and for the eventual widespread adoption of more middle class ways of life and values. This resulted in a culture informed and highly influenced by the United States. New housing for workers, for example, began to resemble the typical American home of those times. The youth of the 1960s began to dress and behave like their American counterparts. Rock 'n roll music reached even the lowest income sectors. Some of the most famous rock 'roll bands, for example, were from humble neighborhoods of small towns in the peripheries of the country. The music of these times is nowadays generally referred to as the music of the Buenas Epocas, a term that reveals, I argue, a type of collective memory agreement about former fortunate times.

Chapter Four is divided in two sections. In the first I explore the last social and economic improvement projects and achievements of the 1948-78 period. The 1970s saw the arrival of technology giant Texas Instruments, a company that, among other things, absorbed entire graduating classes from the Engineering Program of the University of El Salvador. In 1975 the country also took advantage of an automobile assembly program offered by General Motors to developing countries and created its own cargo vehicle: the Cherito. At the end of the decade, and despite the escalating political upheaval, the economy of the nation reached a historic level of GDP per capita that was higher than

that of several other larger economies.[17] In the second section I re-examine the political events that led to the downfall of the country as a "bright spot" and to the civil war of the 1980s. The fraudulent results of the presidential elections of 1972 and 1977, I demonstrate, strengthened the left-wing organizations (whose actions impacted the socio-economic activities of the time) and, eventually led to increased support for armed insurrection at the end of 1979.

[17] 1978 GDP per capita figures: El Salvador (3,157), Dominican Republic (2.437), Bolivia (1,741.6), Paraguay (2,001), Thailand (1,321), Malaysia (2,968), Philippines (1,604). See World Development Indicators database of the World Bank. http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators.

Chapter One: The Remembered History of El Salvador

The readily available body of knowledge about El Salvador generally describes the country as underdeveloped, with a history of exploitation of the working classes, government corruption, and military authoritarianism. The logical conclusion to unending repression and poverty was civil war. This view began to form in the late 1970s and became strong during the civil war in the 1980s. The severity of the war infused in this emerging body the elements that led to the creation of a specific portrayal of El Salvador, that of a nation plagued with a wide range of socio-economic problems that led the people to rebel against an unjust government. News-stories, academic articles, books, documentaries, films, and even musical productions reported and analyzed political disappearances, torture, massacres, and the general institutionalized repression carried out by government forces. A consensus among scholars and journalists is that democracy in El Salvador began to take place only after the country's twelve-year war ended in 1992, when the left-wing guerrillas were, for the first time, able to participate as a political party in the national elections.

Since the early days of the conflict, for example, the assassinations of important public figures as well as the extermination of entire peasant villages made international headlines, and quickly defined the image for which El Salvador would be known in future generations. Among the cases of assassinated important public figures were those of Archbishop Oscar Romero, of the Catholic missionaries Jean Donovan, Ita Ford, Maura Clarke, and Dorothy Kazel, of South Africa's Ambassador Archibald G. Dunn, of

Japanese businessman Fujio Matsumoto, and of the Salvadoran President of the Institute of Tourism Roberto Poma.[18]

In 1982, just two years after the war began, headlines about a mass execution of peasants in the eastern village of El Mozote circulated around the world.[19] Around one thousand peasants were killed in a "scorched earth" operation carried out by the Salvadoran Army.[20] The rationale for conducting the mass killing was the army's belief that the people of El Mozote and neighboring villages were sympathizers and collaborators of the left-wing rebel groups who camped in the surrounding mountains.

The massacre was first covered by journalists Raymond Bonner of the *New York Times*, Alma Guillermoprieto of *The Washington Post*, and Susan Meiselas of Magnum Photos.[21] The reports were highly controversial since the massacre was initially covered up and denied by both the U.S. and the Salvadoran governments in order to be able to continue sending and receiving military aid to stop the advance of the left-

[18] This is a compressed list of the public figures who had lost their lives by 1982. In addition to Archbishop Romero, for example, the Catholic Church of El Salvador also lost six other priests: Alfonso Navarro and Rutilio Grande in 1977, Ernesto Barrera in 1978, Octavio Ruiz in 1979, Rafael Palacios also in 1979, and Cosma Spessotto in 1980. Other public figures that also lost their lives include: businessman Ernesto Regalado in 1971, Salvadoran Minister of Foreign Affairs Mauricio Borgonovo, businessman Raúl Molina, and coffee producer Elena Lima de Chiurato in 1977, ad honorem diplomatic representative and businessman from Israel Ernesto Liebes and Swiss businessman Hugo Weill in 1979, and businessman Nicolas Nasser in 1982. The President of the Institute of Tourism, Poma, was assassinated in 1977, Japanese businessman, Matsumoto, in 1978, South Africa's Ambassador, Dunn, in 1979, and Archbishop Romero and the missionaries Donovan, Ford, Clarke, and Kazel in 1980.

[19] The massacre at El Mozote happened on December 11, 1981. Journalists were only able to visit the site a month later, and news of the event were published until the end of January, 1982.

[20] "Scorched earth" is a military strategy that aims at destroying anything—and anybody—that might be of help to the enemy. In Central America, this strategy was used by the government armies of El Salvador and Guatemala during these countries' civil wars.

[21] Raymond Bonner, "Massacre of Hundreds Reported in Salvador Village," *New York Times*, January 27, 1982, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, and Alma Guillermoprieto, "Salvadoran Peasants Describe Mass Killing," *Washington Post*, January 27, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

wing/communist guerrilla groups.[22] Bonner and Guillermoprieto were targets of criticism by the Reagan administration as well as by conservative publications. The reports were often dismissed as exaggerations or propaganda, and news of the event was mostly muzzled for the following ten years.[23]

The mass killing at El Mozote was soon followed by the El Calabozo massacre, the massacres at Tenango and Guadalupe, the assassinations of other important public figures, such as the six Jesuit priests who were killed by the Salvadoran army at the campus of the Central American University in 1989, and by a decade of carnage that claimed the lives of around seventy five thousand people and displaced half a million more—most of whom migrated to the U.S. Bloodshed continuously fed the news outlets as well as the academic circles with materials that, once published, wound up shaping the portrayal not only of the present, but also of the past of the country for the international as well as domestic Salvadoran audiences.

The earliest academic books that explored the history of the country in order to understand the ongoing armed conflict were also published in the year 1982. These works were Enrique A. Baloyra's, *El Salvador in Transition*, and Tommie Sue Montgomery's *Revolution in El Salvador: Origins and Evolution*, and the assessments presented by these authors became foundations on which much of the future research would rest. [24]

---

[22] Through the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, U.S. Congress had banned aid to governments engaged in human rights violations. The massacre at El Mozote was an obvious human rights violation carried out by governmental forces. Thus, in order to continue being able to send/receive aid to counter communist influence in El Salvador, both governments officially denied the massacre.

[23] One of the conservative newspapers that criticized Guillermoprieto and Bonner was the *Wall Street Journal* in its February 10, 1982 editorial titled "The Media's War." The editorial called the *New York Times* "a dissident paper" and said that the journalist had romanticized the war in El Salvador.

[24] Enrique A. Baloyra, *El Salvador in Transition* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), and Tommie S. Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: Origins and Evolution* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982).

Baloyra examined the historic roots of the socio-economic problems that afflicted the country in the years around its publication, and the impact of the political influence of the United States. He traced the socioeconomic problems back to 1870, when coffee was introduced as a replacement for indigo and became the major cash crop and pillar of the Salvadoran economy. With the new crop, the country saw the formation of a local oligarchy—the owners of the coffee plantations—who would have direct and indirect control over politics and economic activity until the beginning of the civil war of the 1980s. The power of this oligarchy remained unchallenged for around sixty years, until the Great Depression, when unable to control the discontent of the indigenous peasants, they turned over power to the military, who, at the command of General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, silenced the discontent with the infamous massacre of around thirty thousand indigenous peasants—nowadays remembered as *La Matanza* (The Slaughter). This military regime, characterized by its totalitarianism and use of violence, ended in 1948, when a group of young military officers deposed General Salvador Castañeda Castro and aimed at reforming the nation. These young and reformist officers ruled the country until 1979, and despite their intentions, according to Baloyra, failed to bring about any significant change to the nation because they could not assert their power over the coffee oligarchs who still held enormous influence over the politics and economy of the country.

My study differs with Baloyra's view about "unrealized good intentions" of the young reformist officers. The country, I demonstrate, was reconfigured politically, economically, and socially. The reforms achieved changes that were unprecedented in the history of the country. Despite not being able to redistribute the main source of wealth

(land), the reforms began to significantly improve the lives of the lower sectors of society and to integrate them in the political processes by setting basic democratic practices that the population did not have prior to 1948. These developments, my study also indicate, fueled the people's desires for further improvements, and led them to a transformation from passive subjects of exploitation to active protestors against injustice and claimants for democracy in the decade of the 1980s.

For Baloyra, El Salvador first began to experience a transition from oligarchic and military control towards democracy around 1979, when the last military president, Carlos Humberto Romero, was deposed in a coup d'état, the Christian Democratic Party (founded and led by José Napoleón Duarte) began to show high probabilities of attaining the presidency, and when the left wing organizations joined into one large guerrilla group to engage in full-blown civil war.[25] Although he considered that El Salvador was in a period of transition towards progressive reforms, Baloyra also expressed his belief that full democracy would not arrive to the country until the left was allowed to participate in the political arena.[26]

Montgomery's effort to understand and explain the socioeconomic roots of the conflict led her to survey the history of the country a bit further back in time, compared to Baloyra's. She examines the history of El Salvador since colonial times, when leaders adopted the one-crop production model—an economic model that resulted in a social system that was highly polarized and that was sustained for the following five centuries through authoritarianism and violence. According to Montgomery, the country experienced three economic cycles, each cycle characterized by the production of a

[25] Baloyra, *El Salvador in Transition,*1-3.
[26] Ibid, 181-182.

specific cash-crop and made possible through particular practices. The cash-crops were: cocoa in the sixteenth century, indigo in the eighteenth century, and coffee in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The practices were: progressive concentration of wealth in the hands of a few thanks to the systematic expropriation of lands, the exploitation of the labor forces, the continuous conservative stance of governments, and the violent repression of any expressions of discontent. For political history, Montgomery concentrates in the twentieth century and studies the succession of military governments that started in 1932 and ended in 1979. This entire period of political history, according to her, was also formed by cycles, which begin with the military taking over and consolidating its power, continued with the violent suppression of any opposition, ended with a coup d'état carried out by a progressive faction of the army, and began anew with the consolidation in power of that faction. These cycles were repeated, Montgomery states, at least six times from 1932 until 1979, when the country started to experience a period of transition in which new political actors—the Catholic Church and the revolutionary organizations—started to promote fundamental change. During the entire period, however, the State's continuous use of repression as means of social control was linked to the interests of the oligarchs that controlled the economy and whose power had remained unchanged since colonial times.

Like Baloyra, Montgomery was interested in the ongoing civil conflict, and advocated for the interests of the groups that represented the struggle of the working classes. She even warned in the preface that her work was not neutral, but that she attempted to make it as objective as possible. She also expressed her belief that a viable

and lasting solution to the sociopolitical chaos in El Salvador would only be possible when the left-wing organizations were allowed to participate in the political arena.[27]

Both of these works contained notions that would become the norm in future research: El Salvador's economic and political systems have been the same for several centuries, the bulk of the population had historically been dispossessed, exploited, and lived in poverty, and social control had and continued to be maintained through violent means. Although these notions are undeniably true facets of the country's history, they fail to recognize that actual changes took place during certain periods of time. Both Baloyra and Montgomery regard the entire period from 1932 until 1979, for example, as a sequence—or as "cycles"—of military governments that, even though they had some differences, always supported a right-wing/conservative mode of government and consequentially protected the economic interests of the oligarchy. In this study, however, I demonstrate that, even though the military in charge of government were right-wing, anti-communist, and conservative, they were not unconditional servants of the oligarchy. In fact, the military leaders of the period I study posed significant opposition to the traditional coffee elites and often worked against their will in order to modernize the country and bring social improvements to the lower sectors. Instead of "cycles" in which the military repeated a similar story that lead to authoritarianism, my study identifies a radical break in the role of the military. This break happened in 1948, when they changed from unconditional defenders of the oligarchy to leaders of a process of economic and social reforms—a process that was taken over, continued, and even expanded by each of the five administrations in question.

[27] Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador*, 241.

These research subjects and themes—as well as the authors' opinions about El Salvador seeing true change only until the revolutionary organizations were allowed to participate in the political arena—were shared among and imitated by the many researchers that investigated El Salvador during the decade of the civil war and beyond. By the end of the 1980s, the perspectives to explain the war that had been presented by journalists and academics at the beginning of the decade had become a premise that was widely being replicated. A good example of that premise appeared in a 1989 article of *Foreign Affairs*, a prestigious political magazine published since 1922 by the Council on Foreign Relations—a think tank specializing in U.S. foreign policy and international affairs. The article's statements regarding the origins of the war were the following:

> El Salvador is at war because it is one of the sickest societies in Latin America. Its archaic social structure remains basically colonial. Despite some efforts at change, a tiny urban elite and a dominating caste of army officers essentially rule but do not effectively govern an illiterate, disease-ridden and frustrated majority of peasants and urban slum dwellers. Order is often imposed by violence; there is not now, nor has there ever been, a just legal system. The rebels, in short, have had ample cause to lead a revolution.[28]

These views, which were written and published in the final years of the armed conflict, were certainly influenced by a then already large baggage of information about the country that had been accumulated through the previous decade. The statement also shows that the idea of El Salvador being a backward society ruled through violence by military warlord-like officers had become very strong.

[28] James Lemoyne, "El Salvador's Forgotten War," *Foreign Affairs* 68, no. 3 (1989): 105, https://www.jstor.org/stable/20044011.

After the civil war ended in 1992, scholars, journalists, and other investigators kept writing and publishing about El Salvador in surprising amounts as during the conflict. The themes, subjects, and approaches, however, continued to be similar to those explored since the early 1980s and that originally attracted the attention of researchers. The themes that got the most attention are: the rise of the oligarchy and the consequential land dispossession of peasants, the violence through which the laboring classes have historically been controlled, and the establishment and impact of authoritarian military governments.

One of the most important post-civil-war studies that examined the rise of the oligarchy and peasant land dispossession, and which followed the notions presented by Baloyra and Montgomery, was Hector Lindo Fuentes' *Weak Foundations: The Economy of El Salvador in the Nineteenth Century, 1821-1898.* Motivated to explain the historic reasons that led to the civil conflict, the author aimed at documenting the weakness inherited by El Salvador since the nineteenth century, when coffee became the base of the country's economy.[29] The consolidation of the country as a coffee exporter in the last part of the nineteenth century, according to Lindo Fuentes, transformed El Salvador into a nation with one of the most unequal distributions of income and wealth in the world—a fair statement as a 1954 economic assessment concluded that about 92 percent of the population received only about 48 percent of the Gross National Product.[30] The reasons why this happened were because the leaders of the young nation—which achieved independence in 1821—did not implement appropriate policies that would allow eventual progress. What was needed, Lindo-Fuentes proposed, was investment in universal

[29] Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, *Weak Foundations: The Economy of El Salvador in the Nineteenth Century, 1821-1898* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991).
[30] See Chapter Two's "Profile" section.

education and providing credit to small landowners. Instead, the leaders focused their efforts in preparing and engaging in local armed conflicts related to the unification of Central America as one nation. The lack of education and credit created a citizenry who did not have the knowledge or the capital to become coffee producers. The few elites who had those two tools were the only ones able to take advantage of the economic opportunities that the new crop offered. By the 1880s, when coffee had replaced indigo as the main cash-crop and more lands to cultivate coffee were needed, the government passed reforms that allowed for communal lands to be privatized. The indigenous peoples, who traditionally owned these types of lands, were not prepared to face or challenge the new situation, and quickly found themselves landless. The non-indigenous small landowners also found that, without adequate information and credit, they would not be able to succeed in the new economic enterprise, and eventually saw the need to sell their lands to those who had the knowledge and resources to do so.[31] By the end of the nineteenth century, El Salvador had turned into a country with a large and landless population whose only option for survival was to work for the small group of coffee producers who had previously taken their lands. That small oligarchy came to dominate the economic and political life of almost the entire twentieth century. The disproportionate accumulation of wealth in their hands led to increasingly grave social inequality, which in turn created different episodes of unrest and, eventually, led to the civil war of the 1980s.

[31] Once the communal lands were turned into private properties—even though they were owned by the same people—it was easy for the big landowners to coerce the small landholders into selling their plots. Increase in population also had an impact in the accumulation of land in the hands of a few. Lands that were to be inherited had to be partitioned in smaller plots, and since the newly partitioned plots were not large enough to sustain one family, the owners decided to sell, and thus became dependent on wage labor.

Lindo-Fuentes conducted a more in-depth exploration of the nineteenth century than his predecessors, Baylora and Montgomery. His findings, nevertheless, reinforced the notion that El Salvador, since its birth, had been led through an ineffective political system that allowed for only a few to accumulate wealth and to dispossess and exploit the working classes. Lindo Fuente's research differs from that of Baylora and Montgomery in that it does not openly express partiality towards any political group and his explanation about the origins of unequal wealth distribution are convincing.

The theme of peasant land dispossession was further examined by other scholars, some of which focused on the means used by the oligarchs to obtain land—violence. One of the academic works that has become fundamental in the study of violence in El Salvador is *Matanza: El Salvador's Communist Revolt of 1932*, by historian Thomas P. Anderson. Originally published in 1971, *Matanza* was re-edited and published in 1992, just when the conflict came to an end. In its original edition Anderson focused on describing the impact that the Great Depression had in the development of the 1932 peasant insurrection and its eventual bloodshed. [32] The revolt, Anderson stated, had several origins. One was the peasant's discontent with the government because of unmet promises of a land reform project that would have given them back lands taken away from them in the late nineteenth century, when communal lands were abolished. This discontent was aggravated by the effects of the Great Depression. As the price of coffee fell, the plantation owners cut back on cash expenditures and decided to withhold payment to their laborers. The peasants then suddenly found themselves without wages, without land, and without any means to provide for their families. Another factor of great

[32] Thomas P. Anderson, *Matanza, El Salvador's Communist Revolt of 1932* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1971).

importance—the one that actually influenced part of the book's title— was the influence of communism among the peasant population. International as well as local communist activists prepared and sent radical students into the countryside to indoctrinate the peasants, who given their precarious situation, adopted those ideals and, ultimately, united with the urban non-indigenous communist leaders such as Agustin Farabundo Martí in planning and carrying out the revolt.[33]

The book resulted from Anderson's trip to El Salvador in 1969, when he visited the country attracted by a then ongoing armed conflict with neighboring country Honduras. The conflict was a brief (July 14-18) but still bloody confrontation that resulted after Honduras carried a violent mass expulsion of Salvadorans living in that country—an action allegedly triggered by disagreements over the results of a soccer match that would have qualified the winning nation to enter the 1970 FIFA World Cup tournament. Though this conflict was short-lived, it attracted a number of investigators from different venues who started to conduct research and write about El Salvador. Anderson's research on the short war did not result in a publication about that specific event. Instead, he was attracted by the events of 1932 and his studies produced the book *Matanza* that was published in 1971.[34] In that first edition, Anderson did not directly connect the events of 1932 with the sociopolitical climate of the country around the time

[33] The influence of communist activists in organizing and carrying out the revolt was also presented by Salvadoran poet and journalist Roque Dalton in his 1972 book titled *Miguel Marmol y los sucesos de 1932 en El Salvador*. Dalton based his account on interviews with Miguel Marmol, the founder of the Communist Party of El Salvador. Being that the book was in Spanish, the 1932 events became well known among left wing organizations. The alleged communist causality was a convenient facet that, ultimately, even served to give a name—the name of one of the 1932 communist leaders—to the coalition of guerrilla groups that in 1980 united to engage in full scale war against the government: the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional, FMLN. Communist causality has also been used by conservative/right-wing politicians, who have justified the actions of Hernández Martínez as necessary to defend the motherland against the dangerous foreign ideas brought by communist agitators.

[34] Anderson's research on the 1969 conflict with Honduras was published until 1981 under the title *The War of the Dispossessed: Honduras and El Salvador, 1969.*

of publication. His main goal, as previously stated, was to examine the effects of the Great Depression on the socio-economic life of the peasants. The 1992 edition, however, was different. To start, the title of the book was changed to *Matanza: The 1932 Slaughter" That Traumatized a Nation, Shaping US-Salvadoran Policy to This Day*.[35] The title hints at the, by then prevalent, widespread notion that the events of 1932 are of unsurmountable importance in the shaping of the twentieth-century's Salvadoran identity, on all successive State policies, and on the responses from the varying dissident groups. In the preface, also, Anderson not only re-stated emphatically his belief that the revolt was led by communist men like Farabundo Martí, but also expressed that, when he arrived to El Salvador, he felt that the country "desperately needed a revolution" due to the "outrageous poverty, inequality and armed repression" he had observed. The memory of 1932, he added, "frightened the population into docility" for a long time, until Marxist insurgents and other opposition groups appeared and sparked the civil war of the 1980s.[36] The new edition of *Matanza* was translated into Spanish and quickly became an essential reference for both the international and local audiences.

The ending of the war in 1992 created the conditions for a new wave of research on El Salvador. The fact that the war was over provided more access to people, places, archival material, and freedom to investigate controversial events of the recent and past history of the country that, during the war, were just impossible to study. Journalists and other investigators no longer had to experience the danger of having to work in secret or the fear of reprisal for covering contentious issues.

[35] Thomas P. Anderson, *Matanza: The 1932 Slaughter That Traumatized a Nation, Shaping US-Salvadoran Policy to This Day* (Evanston, IL: Curbstone Books, 1992).
[36] Anderson, *Matanza: The 1932 Slaughter That Traumatized a Nation, 1992*, 10.

In 1993, just one year after the peace accords were signed, for example, journalist Mark Danner re-visited the story of the massacre at El Mozote. His investigation resulted in an extensive article that occupied an entire issue of *The New Yorker* and revived the memory of the event.[37] *The Truth of El Mozote,* as the article was titled, served as the basis for Danner's 1994 book *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War*, which received the "notable book of the year" recognition by the New York Times, inspired other works, was translated into Spanish, and became a sort of canonical—local and international—reference for those interested in studying violence in El Salvador.[38]

The resurgence of the event within the academic conversation inspired other scholars who published more articles and books which explored the theme of violence in the context of the events of 1932. Historian Patricia Alvarenga, for example, examined in her 1996 book *Cultura y Ética de la Violencia. El Salvador 1880-1932*, how violence eventually became a "cultural" practice used by the military and civilians of all social classes to exert power.[39] The authoritarian State, according to Alvarenga, was only possible because of the variety of citizens that collaborated with and executed orders from the government. The collaboration of the subaltern classes with the State was in fact the ingredient that during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, helped to gradually create a culture of violence in El Salvador. This culture of violence grew and strengthened after the bloodbath of 1932. The revolt, the author added, opened the doors for more civilians to be willing to become collaborators of the repressive apparatuses since, from then on, State violence was a legitimate response to the threat of communism.

---

[37] Mark Danner, "The Truth of El Mozote," *The New Yorker*, December 6, 1993,50-133.
[38] Mark Danner, *The Massacre at El Mozote: A Parable of the Cold War* (New York, NY: Vintage, 1994).
[39] Patricia Alvarenga Ventuolo, *Cultura y Ética de la Violencia. El Salvador 1880-1932* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1996).

Even though Alvarenga's study focuses on a pre-1932 period, she implied that this culture of collaboration continued well beyond the 1930s. She touches on a delicate issue since it might, for some readers, give the impression that the Salvadoran working classes are responsible for their own repression, and that violence is intrinsic to Salvadoran society. *Cultura y Ética de la violencia, Weak Foundations,* and other books like *Remembering a Massacre* and *Authoritarian El Salvador* —which are reviewed ahead—have titles and content that might only be fully comprehended by experienced scholars. For undergrad students and other readers with little or no knowledge about El Salvador, however, the impression they give might be that this country wasn't destined for anything other than tragedy.

Along with the study of themes such as peasant land dispossession and state violence, scholars also studied the rise of the authoritarian military governments who led the country for about half of the twentieth century. This theme has been explored from various perspectives and by looking at different time spans. One study that has examined the role of the military from its official ascent to power in 1931 until the end of the war in 1992 is *Militarization and Demilitarization in El Salvador's Transition to Democracy*, coauthored by Phillip Williams and Knut Walter.[40] The main argument of the book was that prolonged military rule has been the main obstacle for the democratization of El Salvador. To support this argument, the authors examined the way in which the military managed to stay in power for such a long time. The strategy to consolidate their authority, according to the authors, was to embrace social reform and promise order and stability. Once this goal was attained, they usually set stern limits to their own reforms

[40] Phillip Williams and Knut Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization in El Salvador's Transition to Democracy*, (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 1997).

and became staunch conservatives. This was a cyclical and cynical pattern that happened during the fifty plus years that they remained in power. My study differs with this view. I show that the limits were clearly set from the beginning of the reforms (1948) and had to do with the contending ideologies of the cold-war period. The military were openly anti-communists, regarded left-wing activists as enemies of the nation, and thus worked to avoid political power to fall in the hands of their adversaries. I also demonstrate that the overwhelming obstacles to the reforms projects that would have re-structured the nation were not posed by the military, but by the conservative economic elites.

This book's arguments were strikingly reminiscent of those made by Montgomery, Baloyra and Lemoyne in the 1980s: the military followed cycles that began with liberal promises and ended with conservative actions, and they were also ineffective leaders who blocked the arrival of democracy to the country. What was particular about the book, however, was the authors' assertion that the end of military power—and the beginning of democracy—happened only in 1993, when General René Emilio Ponce offered up his resignation. "Ponce's resignation marked the end of an era in which the military dominated the political sphere with total impunity," reads one of the very first statements of the book.[41]

The themes of land dispossession, violence and military rule are also found interlaced in other post-war academic works. Historians Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, Erik Ching, and Rafael Lara Martínez, for example, co-authored the 2007 book *Remembering a Massacre in El Salvador: The Insurrection of 1932, Roque Dalton, and the Politics of*

[41] Williams and Walter, *Militarization and Demilitarization,* 1.

Historical Memory.[42] The book looks at the peasant revolt as an event organized mostly by the peasants due to their discontent with the land owners, challenging the communist causality previously presented by Anderson in 1971 and by Salvadoran poet and journalist Roque Dalton in his 1972 book *Miguel Mármol, los sucesos de 1932 en El Salvador*. According to the authors, Dalton wrote his interpretation of the revolt and massacre to fit his political priorities, which were to convince his left-wing comrades to go ahead and start an armed confrontation—as the ancestors of 1932 did. Due to the exigencies of the revolutionary intellectuals like Dalton, the authors add, 1932 has been remembered in a particular way—as a communist led insurrection. This particular way of remembering, at the same time, has obscured the voices of the indigenous peasants who were the true main protagonists of the events.

The debate on causality of the events of 1932 was extended by historians Aldo Lauria-Santiago and Jeffrey Gould who, in 2008 published *To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador, 1920-1932*.[43] Instead of exploring and debating the degree of agency of either the indigenous peasants or the communist activists, the authors showed the revolt as a popular movement that included an array of participants: indigenous and non-indigenous rural workers, small land holders, urban artisans, and political activists. This approach demonstrated that the revolt was an event more complex than it had previously been thought and expanded on the ideas presented by the authors of *Remembering a Massacre* about the ways politics had a direct impact in how the events were remembered.

---

[42] Héctor Lindo-Fuentes et al., *Remembering a Massacre in El Salvador: The Insurrection of 1932, Roque Dalton, and the Politics of Historical Memory* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).
[43] Aldo Lauria Santiago and Jeffrey L. Gould, *To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador, 1920-1932* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).

To Rise in Darkness was also translated into Spanish and was made available to audiences beyond the academy.[44] The 200 interviews that were conducted for the project were the basis for the Spanish language video documentary *Cicatríz de la memoria*, which was released six years before the book, when both authors had only recently started to conduct interviews.[45] The video documentary, which was screened throughout the country in schools, public libraries, and other accessible venues, served to disseminate at the local level, knowledge about the 1932 events like no other publication had been able to. Even though Gould and Lauria-Santiago's approach—in both the documentary and the book—produced an analysis that was not aligned with either of the traditional left or right-wing narratives, it still regarded the revolt and massacre as the inevitable consequence of the culture of oppression imposed by the oligarchy and the military, which had its origins in the late nineteenth century with the adoption of coffee as the pillar of the economy. While I agree that the 1932 massacre made evident the culture of oppression imposed by the oligarchy and the military government of that time, I do not believe that it has the degree of influence that it is often attributed to in the development of the civil war of the 1980s. Instead of the 1932 massacre, my study reveals that the conflict of the 1980s is linked to more immediately preceding events related to unmet rising expectations—manifested in the electoral processes of 1972 and 1977, when the government lost its legitimacy in its quest to stop the left from taking over political power.

---

[44] The title of the translation was *1932: Rebelión en la Oscuridad.* It was published in 2008 by the Salvadoran Museum of the Word and the Image, a museum specialized in collecting and preserving memories of the civil war.

[45] *1932, Cicatríz de la Memoria*, directed by Jeffrey L. Gould and Carlos Heríquez Consalvi (Icarus Films, 2002), DVD.

Examinations of the history of the origins of military power have also been the subject of interest by historians. Erik Ching, for example, has looked at the pre-1931 history of military development and influence in *Authoritarian El Salvador: Politics and the Origins of Military Regimes, 1880-1940*.[46] For Ching, the ascendance of the military to power and the consequential peasant revolt and massacre of 1932 was the result of the creation of a centralized authoritarian State. Such a State was gradually developed since the nineteenth century by civilian leaders who attained power through an electoral machine that used intimidation and violence—practices in turn inherited from regional strong men or local bosses who used them extensively to win local elections. One of the first steps towards this centralization of power was the creation of a strong and modern military apparatus, with the most modern equipment and the best training possible, capable not only of defending the State but also of extending its power. This process started in the late nineteenth century and was consolidated between 1913 and 1927, during the administrations led by various members of the powerful Meléndez-Quiñones family. By the late 1920s the political system of El Salvador was backed by a powerful army and by an electoral machine able to steer votes to favor a particular candidate—whoever had received the blessing of the political and economic elites. In sum, the State that General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez took when he staged a coup against Araujo in 1931, was a State that had long been authoritarian and, when necessary, violent. His actions to control the discontent of the indigenous peasants, then, only followed the traditions established by his civilian predecessors.

[46] Erik Ching, *Authoritarian El Salvador: Politics and the Origins of the Military Regimes, 1880-1940* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2014).

Ching studied a key aspect in the development of authoritarianism and the prolonged influence of military rule. Like Alvarenga, he concluded that the military were not the only ones that participated in creating an authoritarian El Salvador in the twentieth century. There were other participants: civilians, from different social strata, who built the foundations on which the military based their style of government. Ching's work on the history of the rise of the military is interlaced with the work of his colleagues who studied the oppression of laboring classes, the coffee oligarchy, and the pervading culture of violence.

The studies cited above are just a small sample of print publications that make up the body of knowledge about El Salvador.[47] In addition to the mass media news-stories and academy oriented publications, however, there is also a wide array of other sources such as documentary films, feature films, musical recordings, mass-market action-adventure paperback novels, poetry, political pamphlets, and testimonial and fiction

[47] Other titles include: Glenn Alan Cheney, *El Salvador. Country in Crisis* (New York, NY: F. Watts, 1982), Joan Didion, *Salvador* (Toronto, Ont: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1983), Teresa Whitfield, *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the murdered Jesuits of El Salvador* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994), Hugh Byrne, *El Salvador's Civil War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996), Anna L. Peterson, *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997), Aldo Lauria Santiago, *An Agrarian Republic. Commercial Agriculture and the Politics of Peasant Communities in El Salvador, 1823-1914* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999), James R. Brockman, *La violencia del amor* (Walden, NY: Plough Publishing House, 2001), Aldo Lauria Santiago and Leigh Binford, *Landscapes of Struggle. Politics, Society and Community in El Salvador* (Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 2004), Paul Almeida, *Waves of Protest. Popular Struggle in El Salvador, 1925-2005* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), Mo Hume, *The Politics of Violence. Gender, Conflict and Community in El Salvador* (Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), Hector Lindo-Fuentes and Erik Ching, *Modernizing Minds in El Salvador. Education Reform and the Cold War* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), Thomas Ward, *Gangsters Without Borders: an Ethnography of a Salvadoran Street Gang* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013).

literature that have immortalized many events and aspects of the country's history, and have contributed to shape its image.[48]

In the 1980s in the United States, for example, El Salvador appeared in the mass-market paperback action-adventure series *The Death Merchant* (fig. 1.1)—which is about a U.S. secret agent who goes around the world fighting communism. In the 55th issue, Richard Chameleon, the mercenary and protagonist of the series, goes to El Salvador with the mission to stop the communist advance. As he carries out his mission, he expresses to his companions his opinions about the country. El Salvador, according to the "death merchant" is a country whose people are "…murderous in their politics," "…cursed with a stupid machoism," and "…prone to cruelty and sadism."[49]

In El Salvador, the publication of novels experienced a boost in the post war period. Local authors found freedom to write and an avid young audience to consume literature about the just passed conflict. Two of the most recognized Salvadoran novelists whose work became locally and internationally acclaimed are Manlio Argueta and Horacio Castellanos Moya. Their novels have been translated into several languages and are often used in college courses related to Central America. Argueta's novel *One Day of Life* is perhaps this author's most successful piece. It tells the story of a peasant woman and her family who suffer the brutality of the Salvadoran army. Though this novel was

[48] Among the documentary films are: *El Salvador: Another Vietnam* (1981), which examines the violent history of the country throughout the twentieth century, *Choices of the Heart* (1983), which tells the story of the American religious sisters who were killed in 1980, *In the Name of the People* (1985), which documents the life of guerrilla soldiers, and *Return to El Salvador* (2010), which looks at the devastation left by the war and the rebuilding efforts in the years after. Some of the well-known feature films are *Salvador* (1986), which is the story of an American journalist who is covering El Salvador in 1980 and thus is present during the bloody events that marked that year, *Romero* (1989), a biographical film about Archbishop Romero, and *Voces Inocentes* (2004), which tells the story of working-class children who are subjected to the violence of the war. Musical recordings include folk stars Peter, Paul and Mary's single *El Salvador* (1983), American Indian activist John Trudell's *But This Isn't El Salvador* (1987), and folk star Joan Baez's *El Salvador* (1989).

[49] Joseph Rosenberg, *Death Merchant# 55. Slaughter in El Salvador* (New York, NY: Pinnacle Books, 1983).

originally published in Spanish in 1980, it was not well known in El Salvador until the post war period because the government banned it due to the negative portrayal it gave of the army. In the US, however, became a well-known reference since its first publication in English in 1983.[50]

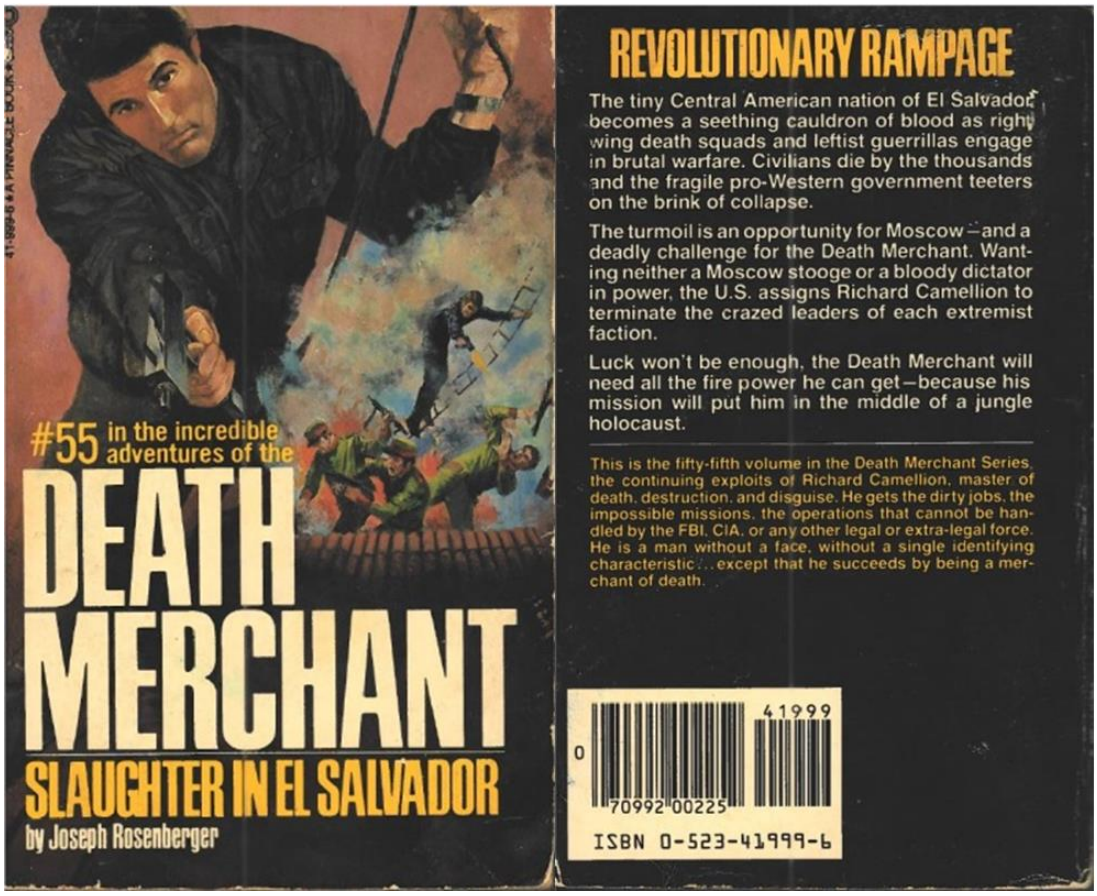


Figure 1.1 Front and back covers of issue # 55 of the Death Merchant series, 1983

Journalist/novelist Horacio Castellanos Moya is also one of the most successful writers of the post-war period. Most of his novels have been translated to other languages, and almost his entire literary production is related to the civil war, its origins and its consequences. His success began in 1997 with the publication of the most

[50] Manlio Argueta, *One Day of Life* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1983).

controversial work of his career: *El Asco. Thomas Bernhard en San Salvador*.[51] The novel parodies the work of Austrian writer Thomas Bernhard, whose work was both acclaimed and criticized for his harsh opinions about his homeland. Castellanos Moya's *El Asco* presents the views—in a monologue style—of Edgardo Vega, a self-exiled Salvadoran who is ashamed of his origins so much that he has changed his name—to that of the Austrian writer. In his monologue, Vega viciously trashes almost all of the traditional Salvadoran cultural values and paints the country as a place unworthy of existence. The Salvadoran food—the traditional *pupusas* and the Salvadoran beer Pilsener, mainly—are deemed as "diarrhea inducing," the political leaders as avaricious and illiterate criminals, the intellectuals and artists as ideological fanatics and mediocre simulators, and the general population as heinous, tasteless, violent, and ignorant. El Salvador, according to the character, is a country that has nothing to offer to the civilized world. It does not exist. The only reason it has been heard of is because of its violence, because of the war atrocities that have filled out the pages of the international press.

The novel garnered its author enough death threats to make him leave the country. From then on, he published several other titles in which El Salvador appears as it was painted by Vega, his character from *El Asco.* His novels *Baile con Serpientes, La Diabla en el Espejo,* and *El Arma en el Hombre,* particularly, are fast-paced thrillers whose plots take place in the chaotic city of San Salvador.[52] Even though Castellanos Moya's novels are considered serious literature in academic circles, the stance that the main protagonists take towards El Salvador resembles that taken by Richard Chameleon, the main characters of the *Death Merchant* series from the early 1980s. The similarity shows how

[51] In English, *Revulsion: Thomas Bernhard in San Salvador.*
[52] In English, *Dances with Snakes, The She-Devil in the Mirror,* and *Weapons Within Man.*

a single image of El Salvador had become prevalent in both the popular as well as in the academic circles.

Paperback action-adventure series like *Death Merchant*, serious literature like *El Asco*, documentary films such as the 1981 *El Salvador: Another Vietnam*, musical recordings like Peter, Paul and Mary's song *El Salvador*, and academic works like those here reviewed, all have captured, through different perspectives, one true facet of the country: that of a nation that has suffered poverty, underdevelopment, and violence. As a group, these publications constitute a body of knowledge about El Salvador—a body of knowledge that provides new researchers with references, perspectives, and premises to build on. The gradual growth of this body of knowledge leaves events, periods of time, important people, and entire aspects of the country in the shadows, since they do not contribute to strengthen the already established premises. The focus on 1932 has not allowed much light, for example, on an event that should be of equal importance, and that has the possibility of presenting El Salvador as a nation of peace-loving citizens: the 1944 Huelga de Brazos Caídos—a passive civilian strike that paralyzed the economic activity of the country and forced the dictator Hernández Martínez to resign.[53] It also hasn't allowed for much light on the mid-twentieth century period—a period that, as I demonstrate in the following sections, has the possibility of presenting the country as an important industrial center in the Central American area, and as a country where socioeconomic development was actually taking place.

[53] Such event not only brought consequences for El Salvador, but for other Central American countries. It could be argued that it was the one event that served as example (and spark) for the Guatemalan Revolution, which deposed the long-time dictator Jorge Ubico. It might also have served as inspiration for the 1947 Huelga de Brazos Caídos in Costa Rica—an important precursor to this country's 1948 civil war.

Chapter Two: Reconfiguring the Nation, the 1950s

Profile

In 1948 El Salvador was a country of 1,800,000 people. Based on its area, 20,877 square kilometers, the population density was 88.9 per square kilometer, which made it the second most densely populated country in Latin America.[54] Annual population growth was 3.3 percent. Approximately seventy-five percent of the population lived in rural areas and only twenty-five percent in urban centers.[55] Most of the 653,409 people that formed the economically active population were dedicated to agricultural activities. The pillar of the economy was the large-scale cultivation of coffee for export purposes. This activity had started in the late nineteenth century and, by 1948, was bringing around eighty-five percent of the total value of the country's exports.[56] GDP per capita was about $175 US. An estimate of income distribution, however, showed that about 92 percent of the population received only about 48 percent of the Gross National Product.[57] Average life expectancy was 40 years, and the illiteracy rate was 87.3 percent.[58]

In terms of governmental organization, El Salvador was a republic headed by a President. The legislative authority was a single chamber National Assembly composed of fifty-two popularly elected deputies. The Judicial branch was headed by the Supreme Court of Justice composed of seven judges elected by the National Assembly. The country's Constitution had been originally drafted in 1886 and had only minor amendments by 1946. Since 1931, the country had been led by authoritarian style

---

[54] The first was Haiti, with a population density of 112 people per square kilometer.
[55] Maude T. Barrett, *Social Welfare Programmes. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador* (New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954),1.
[56] W.J. Feuerlein, *Proposals for the Further Development of El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador* (New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954), 12-13.
[57] W.J. Feuerlein, *Proposals,* 11.
[58] Maude T. Barrett, *Social Welfare,* 1-2, and Anna M. Fisher, "Nursing in El Salvador," *The American Journal of Nursing* 55, no.6 (1955):684, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3468884.

military governments who worked in close alliance with the economic elites—the coffee plantation owners. The first of the military leaders was General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, who stayed in power until 1944 when he was deposed. His legacy, nevertheless, lasted until 1948 as the three subsequent Heads of State continued to rule in the same conservative and repressive style.

The State

On December 14, 1948, the president of El Salvador, General Salvador Castañeda Castro was deposed in a coup d'état. The coup was carried out by the Military Youth, a faction formed by young officers whose vision about the role of government differed with that of Castañeda Castro, who was ruling in a similar style as Hernández Martínez. The conservative General had taken harsh measures against labor organizations and allowed many traditional political elites to regain power they had lost since 1944 when Hernández Martínez was forced out of the presidency. What finally triggered the coup, however, was the declaration of his intentions to extend his rule beyond what the National Assembly had authorized. The announcement created discontent within the population and some military factions that felt the government was taking backward steps to the times of Hernández Martínez, who had used his power to remain in office for thirteen years.

The 1948 coup d'état, called The Revolution of 1948, replaced the executive office with a Government Council composed of three military officers and two civilians. The Council immediately announced its intentions to reform the State into a truly democratic system, to organize elections, and to craft a new Constitution that would

foment and nourish social, political, economic, and cultural unity. [59] Elections took place in March 1950, and, for the following thirty years, the country experienced unprecedented reforms in its political system and in its socio-economic activities.

The reforms were led by five Heads of State who were all members of the Military Youth, the group of young officers (Colonels) that deposed Castañeda Castro. Unlike the faction made up by higher ranking officers (Generals) who had been educated in the local military school (the Escuela Militar Gerardo Barrios) and had a conservative vision of government, the members of this group had all been sent to study in military academies abroad (Italy, Mexico, Spain, and the US), and thus had become aware of the changes that were happening in the world and saw the need to reform their country. The first of these presidents, Oscar Osorio, for example, had been sent to Mexico in 1944, when that country was beginning to implement its project for economic stabilization known as the "Mexican miracle." His appreciation of that country's experience wielded great influence on his return to El Salvador. The new political party he co-founded (the Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unification, PRUD) and the measures for economic growth that he promoted were roughly modeled after the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party and the import substitution industrialization projects that Mexican President Manuel Ávila Camacho had initiated since 1941. The third of these presidential leaders, Julio Adalberto Rivera Carballo, was sent to study in Italy during Osorio's administration. One of the places he went to was the Naval Academy in the city of Livorno— a city regarded by many as "the birthplace of Italian communism," since it was there where the Italian Communist Party was founded in 1921 by Antonio Gramsci

[59] Consejo de Gobierno Revolucionario, Decreto No.1, "Erigese un Consejo de Gobierno Revolucionario que Asume Todos los Poderes del Estado," *Diario Oficial* 145, no. 125 (Diciembre 16, 1948): 4273, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/1948/1948-2T/1948-2T_Parte51.pdf.

and Amadeo Bordiga. While living in Livorno Rivera Carballo was exposed to Marxist theory/ideology, which eventually resulted in him holding a position of openness and even cooperation with the left wing sectors. President Fidel Sánchez Hernández took courses in the United States as well as in Spain and was a UN observer in Korea just before the start of that country's war in 1950. President Arturo Armando Molina, who attempted to follow the steps of Osorio also went to study in Mexico in the late 1950s.[60]

Although they were young (the first, Colonel Oscar Osorio, was thirty nine years old when he took office, and became the youngest President in the hemisphere at the time) and inexperienced in politics, all these leaders shared fundamental common characteristics and each of them gave continuity to the work of their predecessors.[61] Their main common characteristics were their criticism to the hard conservatism of the Hernández Martínez- military factions, their anti-communist stance, their connection with a civil liberal-intellectual elite that helped them carry out reforms, a model of populism that sought both the favor of the population as well as of the economic elites in order to bring industrialization to the country, and their willingness to carry out projects and to

[60] See Jorge Rafael Cáceres Prendes, "Concideraciones Sobre el Discurso Político de la Revolución de 1948 en El Salvador," *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* no.5 (1979): 33-52, http://jstor.com/stable/25661760. For the history of the development of communism in Livorno, Italy, see John M. Cammett, *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967). For more information on Presidents Sánchez Hernández and Molina see Waldo Chávez Velasco, *Lo que no Conté Sobre los Presidentes Militares* (San Salvador: Indole Editores, 2006).
[61] "El Salvador Inaugural: Osorio, 39, Will Be the Youngest President in Hemisphere," *New York Times,* September 14, 1950.

implement policies that significantly changed the lives of the previously marginalized social classes.[62]

Political Reforms

Significant political changes that marked the following three decades began to take place in December 1948, just after the coup. The Revolutionary Government Council was itself an innovation as it was formed by both military and civilian members—Colonel Manuel J. Córdoba, Major Oscar Bolaños, Major Oscar Osorio, Dr. Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, and Dr. Humberto Costa. Their first significant enactment was the proclamation of the "Fourteen Points" of the Revolution, which was a list of principles and objectives they were publicly committing to.[63] The fourth point, which is of particular interest to this study, was "to provide the social, political, and economic bases for a new democratic system."

---

[62] For Osorio, the model of populism to follow was not that of a leader, but of a strong party: the Mexican PRI—although without the nationalist element of the Mexican party. Osorio's approach in that regard was followed by Lemus, Rivera Carballo, and Sánchez Hernández. While Molina was also an admirer of Osorio, and thus of the strength of the PRI, he also saw the government of Juan Velasco Alvarado in Perú (1968-1975) as an example to consider, specifically in light of his efforts for the redistribution of wealth. Aside from the parallels in the efforts for industrialization, Peronism was not a model to follow for any of the presidents. They never practiced a cult of personality, did not attempt to remain in power, or continue influencing the subsequent governments. The Military Youth, through Article 5 of the Constitution of 1950 (which established alternation in presidential power) wanted to eliminate "Martinismo" and such political phenomena from Salvadoran politics.

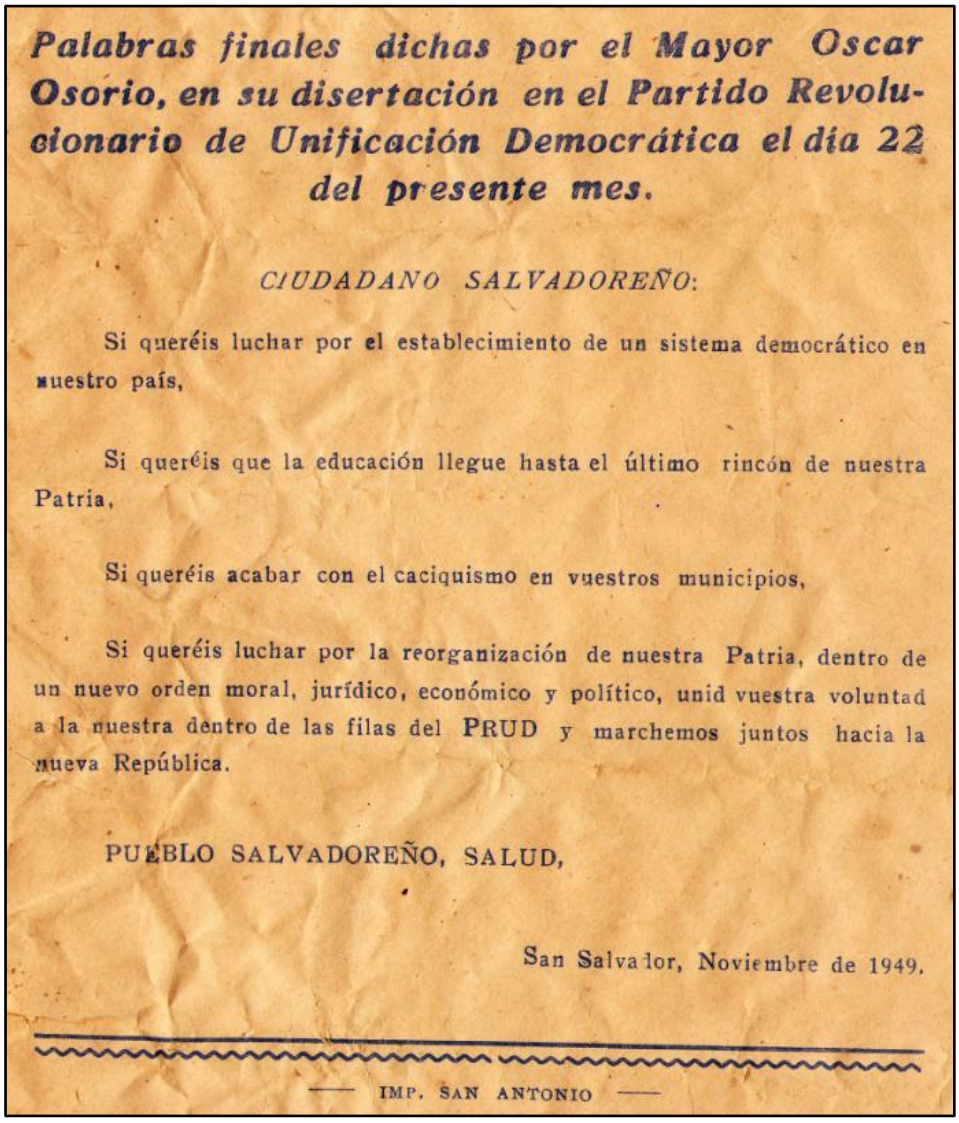
[63] The Fourteen Points (made public on December 25th) were: 1st: To establish a true democratic system. 2nd: Freedom within order should be an effective right for Salvadorans. 3rd: Establishment of a new juridical order, represented in a Constitution similar to that of the advanced democracies of the world. 4th: Provide the social, political, and economic bases for the new democracy. 5th: Create an Electoral Code that would facilitate elections, make the right to vote accessible, and avoid fraud. 6th: Honesty in the administration of public funds. 7th: To raise the life standards of Salvadorans by supporting a boost in production through technology and the stimulation of the private enterprise. 8th: Sustain the integrity and technical development of the National Army and restore its apolitical nature and its status as guardian of liberty and defender of the law. 9th: To make effective the separation of State powers and moderate the influence of the executive. 10th: Autonomy for the municipalities. 11th: Respect and guarantees for civil servants. 12th: Promote unity and safety to all Salvadorans to achieve progress. 13th: Friendship with all the Central American nations though economic and cultural exchange. 14th: Honor all treaties and compromises made by previous governments with other nations and firm adherence to the United Nations. See "Principios y Objetivos del Consejo de Gobierno Revolucionario," *Informaciones de El Salvador*, August 14, 1950, 33.

The elections that took place between March 26 and 28, 1950, were also unique in the sense that there were two presidential contenders who both won a significant percentage of the turnout. Major Oscar Osorio, who ran for the PRUD (Revolutionary Party for Democratic Unification) won 56% of the votes, and his opponent Colonel José Asencio Menéndez, who ran for the PAR (Renovated Action Party) obtained 44%. These percentages were new and unusual. In the 1945 elections, for example, Castaneda Castro got 99 % of the vote against the 0.22 % of his contender, Colonel Osmín Aguirre. In the previous elections of 1944, 1939, and 1935, Hernández Martínez had been the only candidate. Even before the military first took power in 1931, the electoral processes were characterized for having either only one candidate or one official candidate running against a nominal opponent.[64]

The style of the 1950 campaign was also new. Major Oscar Osorio and Dr. Reynando Galindo Pohl, who were original members of the Government Council, resigned in October 1949, to create the PRUD and focus on the upcoming elections. Their victory can be explained in part because, during the campaign, Osorio did something no other politician had done before: he reached out to the laboring classes, visiting even rural towns far away from the capital city, and securing in that way the vote of those who had never seen a presidential candidate take an interest in them (fig. 2.1).[65] In these elections Salvadorans also chose the 52 members of the National Constituent Assembly (which Galindo Pohl led) whose first task was to craft a new Constitution.

[64] In the elections of 1931, for example, Arturo Araujo got 47% of the vote against 28 % of his opponent Alberto Gómez Zarate. The 1927, 1923, 1919, and 1915 elections had all only one candidate—of the National Democratic Party—who won unopposed.

[65] Ignacia Everilda Lobo attested to this aspect of Osorio's campaign in a newspaper article about the history of women's rights in El Salvador. Lobo was 20 years old in 1950, the first time she voted in her hometown Nueva Guadalupe, San Miguel—located in the eastern part of the country, about three hours from the capital city. See Menly Cortéz, "Ignacia Everilda Lobo, Una de las Primeras Mujeres en Votar en El Salvador en 1950," *El Diario de Hoy*, Enero 27, 2019.



Palabras finales dichas por el Mayor Oscar Osorio, en su disertación en el Partido Revolucionario de Unificación Democrática el día 22 del presente mes.

CIUDADANO SALVADOREÑO:

Si queréis luchar por el establecimiento de un sistema democrático en nuestro país,

Si queréis que la educación llegue hasta el último rincón de nuestra Patria,

Si queréis acabar con el caciquismo en vuestros municipios,

Si queréis luchar por la reorganización de nuestra Patria, dentro de un nuevo orden moral, jurídico, económico y político, unid vuestra voluntad a la nuestra dentro de las filas del PRUD y marchemos juntos hacia la nueva República.

PUEBLO SALVADOREÑO, SALUD,

San Salvador, Noviembre de 1949.

IMP. SAN ANTONIO

Figure 2.1 Political flyer of Osorio's campaign found in a private collection of documents in the rural eastern town of Tecapán, Usulután. It reads: *Salvadorans: If you want to fight to establish a democratic system, if you want education to reach the most remote corners, if you want to end the rule of local political bosses, if you want to fight for a new juridical, economic, political, and moral order, join the PRUD and let's march towards a new Republic. Salvadoran people, salutations!*

The inclusion of the working classes in the electoral process, regardless of gender, occupation and/or location, was also part of the plans of the new government and an

innovative feature of the 1950 election. A provisional election law issued by the Revolutionary Government Council approved universal suffrage. This law granted the right to vote to all citizens of at least 18 years of age and also allowed women to vote without restrictions for the first time. Female suffrage had been a right demanded by women's organizations since the time of Hernández Martínez but that had been only partially fulfilled. Although the practice was first introduced in El Salvador in 1939 at the behest of the General, it had limitations that allowed only a few women to exercise it: female voters had to be able to read and write, married women had to be over 25 and single women had to be over 30. After the General was deposed in 1944 there were various women's organizations that pronounced themselves in favor of the unrestricted right of suffrage. The Frente Democratico Femenino (founded in 1944), for example, expressed in their newspaper *Mujer Democrata*, that "the suffrage restrictions were a shame for the country."[66] The Asociación de Mujeres Democráticas de El Salvador, which was founded in the following year also published the newspaper *Tribuna Femenina*, which also conveyed the growing demand to end the suffrage restrictions.[67] When the Military Youth took over power in 1948, thus, they encountered the unresolved issue and included it in their plans for immediate reform. With the approval of universal suffrage in 1950, the restrictions for women ended and the country became the first Central American nation to have unrestricted female suffrage.[68] This was an important step for the country as it signaled the progressive stance of its new leaders. El Salvador's

[66] See *Historia de El Salvador. Tomo II*, 197.
[67] Ibid.
[68] El Salvador was the first of the Central American nations where women voted without restrictions (in March 1950). Costa Rica followed in the elections that took place on July of the same year. In Nicaragua and Honduras women were able to vote until 1957 and in Guatemala until 1965.

female suffrage was not only a first in Central America, but had also happened earlier than other Latin American countries like Mexico (1953) and Colombia (1957).

After the elections, the Liga Femenina Salvadoreña, a feminist organization founded in 1946, urged the Constituent Assembly to declare women as citizens with equal rights to men, which would give them the right to hold public office.[69] The Constituent Assembly welcomed the proposals brought by the Liga Femenina and that same year, Rosario Lara Vda. de Echeverría was elected in the eastern town of Berlin, Usulután, as the first female Mayor of the country.[70] A further political milestone was achieved in the process of according equal rights to women in the subsequent elections of 1956, when four women—María Isabel Rodríguez, Rosa Amelia González Araujo, Inés Inocente González and Blanca Avalos Méndez were elected deputies to the Constituent Assembly.

The new Constitution, which was passed in September 1950, was itself an important accomplishment of lasting impact for the country. It represented a radical rupture with the past, replacing the Constitution of 1886, which had been crafted for the benefit of the coffee elites and was based on the idea that the State had to be a neutral entity, dedicated only to maintaining order and defending the nation from external threats.[71] The Constitution of 1950 re-defined the State as a regulator/mediator of social and economic relations. According to Article II, it was the obligation of the State to

[69] Spanish is a gendered language. This represented a problem for women as the word used for citizen, *ciudadano*, refers to male citizens only. The language was fixed in the Constitution of 1950 with a clause that read "All Salvadorans over eighteen years of age are citizens, without distinction as to sex." This recognition of citizenship also granted women the right to hold public office.

[70] *Historia de El Salvador. Tomo II* (San Salvador, ES: Ministerio de Educación. Comisión Nacional de Libros de Texto Gratuitos, 1994), 197.

[71] The Constitution of 1886 remained in its original form until 1939, when Hernández Martínez replaced it for another one crafted to help him remain in power. In 1946, Castañeda Castro reinstated, in amended form, the Constitution of 1886.

"ensure the inhabitants of the Republic enjoy liberty, health, culture, economic well-being, and social justice."

The new Constitution granted full citizenship to all adults over eighteen years old regardless of sex. This recognition allowed the working classes to participate in the political process in unprecedented ways. Salvadorans of the lowest ranks of society were now able to vote without prohibitive restrictions, they had the freedom to associate and form political parties, the right to hold public office, and the right to seek protection before the Supreme Court of Justice for the violation of the rights granted by the Constitution.[72]

Through its section on social rights, the new Constitution was presented as an example of modern jurisprudence that echoed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights recently adopted by the United Nations.[73] Some of the most outstanding articles of this section declared that the State had the duty to protect minors, the provision of free basic education for all citizens, the supervision and regulation of the professions related to health care, and the assistance and protection of indigents and people unable to work due to physical or mental incapacity. It also granted equal rights to children born in or out of wedlock, it gave workers the right to strike, to initiate a labor dispute, to create and join trade unions, and it provided clauses for the eradication of child labor.[74]

The new Constitution also included a clause that aimed at avoiding one of the main problems that happened with previous administrations: the long permanence in power of the President. Article 5 declared that "alternation in presidential power" was

[72] Constitution of the Republic of El Salvador 1950, art. 22-34, sec. 3.
[73] The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the UN on December, 1948. Section 11 of the Salvadoran Constitution of 1950 was crafted based on the concept of universal social protection—the base of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
[74] Constitution of the Republic of El Salvador 1950, art. 180-181, sec. 11, ch. 1.

indispensable, and that any attempt to violate this norm made insurrection an "obligation." Although brief and straightforward, this norm showed the disposition of the new leaders to depart from the personalist dictatorship established by Hernández Martínez.[75]

The impact of the new Constitution on the population was immediate. Its chapters and articles on political, labor, health, and education rights gave the laboring classes the confidence to start participating in the reform projects as beneficiaries and also as actors in establishing the constitutional ideals of building a new country. The Constitution's recognition of basic worker's rights drove the working classes to push for more reform laws and, eventually, for the creation of the country's first Labor Code. The freedom of association and the universality of the right of suffrage also resulted in an increase in people's participation in the electoral processes. By 1956, for example, seven political parties competed in the presidential contest.[76] The new Constitution encouraged broader participation in the political process and civil society. This shift was a completely new

[75] Constitution of the Republic of El Salvador 1950, art. 5, sec. 1.
[76] The Parties were: Democratic Institutional Party, National Action Party, National Democratic Party, Authentic Constitutional Party, and Renovated Action Party.

type of relationship between the State and the population, as it gave the working classes a basic degree of agency which gradually improved in the following two decades.[77]

Although the reforms brought by the new government did change the political dynamics of the nation and began to grant agency to the underprivileged classes, the new system of government still had its limitations. All of the Heads of State of the studied period remained active military officers, and therefore the military continued to be at the center of the country's politics. The official party (PRUD) not only was in charge of the executive office, but (by virtue of the system used to elect the legislative body which allowed the party that received the most votes to win all deputy seats) also controlled the Legislative Assembly and consequentially the Supreme Court (appointed by the Legislative Assembly)—a situation that did not begin to change until the voting system was modified in 1963. There were also limitations in terms of enforcing the articles on social rights of the new Constitution. The clauses on the eradication of child labor, for example, did not progress as the problem is still present. The new government also did not create a branch dedicated specifically to ensure the enforcement of the newly enacted

[77] The legacy of the 1950 Constitution continues today. The current supreme law of El Salvador—the Constitution of 1983—contains, with some amendments, verbatim passages of the Constitution of 1962, which in turn is an almost exact copy of the Constitution of 1950. The Constitutions of 1962 and 1983 were made after changes in government and reflected the realities of their particular times as well as the desire of those in power to present a new image. The 1962 Constitution, for example, was passed after the military reformed their political party, the PRUD, and created the National Conciliation Party (PCN), which would remain "the official party" until 1979. The main changes were the reduction of the presidential term from six to five years and the extension of the right to join unions to workers of autonomous official institutions. The Constitution of 1983 was passed after the political chaos that started in 1979 with the overthrow of General Romero. After the coup that deposed him, the executive branch was occupied by three Government Juntas that ruled from 1979 to 1982. During those years the government was deemed as the source of mass violence against the population in its effort to stop the left-wing upheaval that had just started. The 1983 Constitution highlighted the beginning of civilian-led governments. It was passed, however by a majority of right-wing deputies who re-instated the Constitution of 1962 (which had been suspended during the previous years) and later used its main text for the new draft. The main addition to the 1983 Constitution was an agrarian reform decree which established a limit to the amount of hectares that landholders could own. The fundamental ideals of the current Constitution of El Salvador can be traced to the Constitution of 1950. See Richard A. Haggerty and Library of Congress. Federal Research Division, *El Salvador: A Country Study* (Washington, DC: The Division, 1990), 144-152.

social rights. The social improvements that the population received were implemented through the various newly created programs and entities that worked on specific goals (e.g., education, health care) and often times did not reach much of the rural population. The anti-communist position of all the Heads of State of this period also posed an obstacle to the political liberties of many citizens as any left wing or socialist-like views were regarded as subversive and its proponents were repressed. In 1952, for example, the government of Osorio passed the Law for the Defense of the Democratic Order (Ley de la Defensa del Orden Democratico), which officially gave the government the power to persecute and send to exile many left-leaning activists.[78]

Economic Infrastructure

In addition to re-organizing the political administration of the country, the next objectives of the new government were the re-orientation of the economic activities and the creation of social programs. The successful realization of these broad objectives required professional assessment of the status of the country's resources and advice on where and how to make improvements. The solution to these needs came in a timely coincidence: just over two months after the Revolutionary Government Council had taken power, the United States announced the creation of a technical assistance program for developing nations. The "Point Four Program," as it was called, was the fourth objective of President Harry S. Truman's foreign policy.[79] It offered scientific knowledge and advice for improvement in the areas of agriculture, industry, health, and education.

[78] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 876, "Ley de Defensa del Orden Democratico y Constitucional," *Diario Oficial* 157, no. 231 (Diciembre 5, 1952): 8189, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/1952/1952-3T/1952-3T_Parte38.pdf.
[79] The program was announced in President Harry S. Truman's inaugural address on January 20, 1949.

Its political goal, however, was to win over the will of developing nations by showing how democracy and capitalism could provide better life conditions than those offered by socialism. The governments who embraced the program, thus, were either openly or tacitly aligning with the United States'anti-communist position.

The government of El Salvador immediately requested the help of the program and in the same year received a team of technical experts to provide advice in the areas of agriculture, health and sanitation, fisheries, education, and economy.[80] In addition to assistance from the "Point Four Program," the government also requested the help from the United Nations Technical Assistance Programme, a similar project that provided expert advice on social and economic aspects to developing nations. The UN mission arrived in July 1951, and within the following year submitted a total of thirteen studies to the government. The technical experts had examined the status and possibilities of electric power production, highways, ports, geological resources, industrial activities, housing, commerce, public finance, telecommunications, and social welfare programs.[81]

The advice for economic reforms given by the technical experts of the Point Four Program and the United Nations technical missions was not far from the goals and commitments established in the Fourteen Points by the Revolutionary Government Council. Economic re-orientation was to be achieved through diversification in agricultural production, through improvements to the tourism and fishing industries, and by starting the production of industrial goods. Concrete measures towards those reform objectives began in 1949 and aimed at providing the necessary infrastructure for the

[80] US Department of State, *The Application of Point Four in El Salvador*, by Angier Biddle Duke, Bulletin 4783 (Washington, DC, 1952).
[81] W.J. Feuerlein, *Proposals*, 1-3. The thirteen UN technical mission studies were first given to the Government of El Salvador between 1951 and 1952. General distribution was authorized until 1954.

planned development. The initial measures included procuring a steady supply of electric power and in the construction of adequate roads and ports.

The supply of electricity was to be obtained by installing hydroelectric dams along the various rapids of the largest water stream of the country, the Lempa River. [82] On December 5, 1949, the Government Council authorized the Lempa River Hydroelectric Commission to secure a loan from the World Bank to start the construction of the first dam.[83] A loan for $12,545,000 US was given that same year by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, on the condition that the country provided $5,240,000 US for local costs such as labor and management.[84] This requirement was solved by issuing local bonds, a financing technique used for the first time in the country, which, in addition to serving its main purpose, also established a local capital market that would strengthen efforts towards a diversified economy.[85]

The construction of the first dam began in June 1951, and was inaugurated three years later, in June of 1954, as "The Fifth of November Hydroelectric Dam," in

[82] In those years electricity in El Salvador was generated at a few privately owned diesel plants. It was, thus, a privilege of a few in the big cities and, in the country-side, only found in the coffee processing plants and the landholders' haciendas.

[83] Consejo de Gobierno Revolucionario, Decreto No. 404, "Autorizase a la Comisión Ejecutiva Hidroeléctrica del Rio Lempa Para que Contrate con el Banco Internacional de Reconstrucción y Fomento," *Diario Oficial* 147, no. 269 (Diciembre 6, 1949): 4093, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/1949/1949-2T/1949-2T_Parte44.pdf.

[84] *El Salvador. Rio Lempa Hydroelectric Project: Loan 0022. Loan Agreement. Conformed (English),* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 1949), 3-30, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/138841468021613092/El-Salvador-Rio-Lempa-Hydroelectric-Project-Loan-0022-Loan-Agreement-Conformed.

[85] At the time, the local economic elites—the coffee barons—invested exclusively in coffee production. They accumulated their fortunes mostly in foreign banks, and thus the Salvadoran money did not circulate as there were no enterprises attracting their investment. The money raised through the bonds for the first hydroelectric dam was one of the first incentives for the elites to invest in something different than coffee.

remembrance of the "First Cry for Independence" that happened on November 5, 1811.[86] The initial output of the plant was 30 thousand kilowatts, which represented a 125% increase to the total previous capacity. By the end of the decade, however, the plants' output had doubled, and by the mid-1960s it reached its maximum output, 82 thousand kilowatts.[87] The drive for electrification continued in the following two decades with the construction of a 15 thousand kilowatts dam in the Guija Lake, two additional dams along the Lempa River (of 135 and 157 thousand kilowatts, respectively), and with a geothermal plant of 30 thousand kilowatts capability in Ahuachapán.[88]

The exploitation of water and geothermal resources to generate electricity brought great changes to the country. The availability of electric power helped with the expansion and diversification of agricultural production by making the irrigation of crop lands with electric pumping systems a reality. It satisfied the demand for electric power from the few already established industries, it stimulated their growth, and it facilitated the creation of new light and, eventually, heavy industrial enterprises. In terms of social impact, the arrival of hydroelectric power changed the lives of the majority of Salvadorans since, for the first time, affordable lightning was available in streets, public

[86] According to the thought of Osorio, the arrival of hydroelectric power to El Salvador was, after Independence from Spain, the second great event in the History of El Salvador. It was also another "first step" towards the desired economic independence and, thus, it had to be given a significant historic name. This same philosophy was applied by the government that inaugurated the last dam in 1983, as they named it "Fifteen of September," the date the country actually achieved its independence from Spain.
[87] "Electrificación de El Salvador," *Centroamérica. Integración económica y su Mercado Común. 1951-1967* (San Salvador, ES: Publicidad Integrada Centroamericana, 1967),165-166.
[88] The Guajoyo Hydroelectric Plant, installed in the Guija Lake, started operations in December 1963. The Cerrón Grande and the 15 of September plants, both installed along the Lempa River, were inaugurated in 1976 and 1983, respectively. The geothermal plant was installed in the geyser area of Ahuachapán and started operations in September 1975. See Comisión Ejecutiva Hidroeléctrica del Río Lempa, "Historia de CEL," https://www.cel.gob.sv.

spaces, and homes.[89] After it extended the electrical power gird, the government eventually expanded tap water service. Electric water pumps, which started to be purchased in greater numbers by rural municipalities, brought tap water service to small towns by pumping water from artesian aquifers.

The infrastructure projects that followed electrification were the creation of adequate transportation routes and ports. Since transportation networks were indispensable for the coffee industry, El Salvador, by the early 1950s, already had built a basic network of highways and railroads that connected the coffee production areas with the ports of Acajultla, La Libertad and Cutuco, with the Guatemalan border and that country's route to Puerto Barrios, and with the capital city San Salvador.[90] The main paved artery was the country's section of the Pan American Highway, which covered 170 miles from the border with Guatemala in the west to the border with Honduras in the east. From this highway stemmed a new network of paved, graveled, and earth roads that connected the country's cities, towns, coffee plantations, and ports. Nevertheless, the gravel and dirt roads that serviced small populations, the need for bridges, and the absence of a highway along the Pacific coast, represented limitations for the plans of economic diversification.

[89] Salvadorans began to experience serious cultural changes as result of the new abundance of electric power. Radios, record players, refrigerators, and other household appliances, for example, began to be imported in greater amounts. The number of movie theatres increased to satisfy the demands for entertainment of all social classes. Existing print shops grew and new ones appeared, making newspapers and other publications available for more people and, at the same time, supporting ongoing literacy campaigns. Mass media, thus, began to reach the working classes in unprecedented ways. Much of the content presented by radio stations, newspapers, and movie theatres had its origins in the United States, and thus, Salvadorans began a process of cultural "Americanization" that would reach its highest point in the 1960s (which is explored in the following chapter).

[90] John H. Clarke, *Inland Transport in El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador* (New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954), 1-2.

As the coastal lands had been envisioned as a site for large scale cultivation of cotton and sugar cane, the construction of a paved highway that would connect those areas with the ports and the capital city was crucial. Construction began in 1954 with the help of another loan (of $11,100,000 US) from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The all-weather Littoral highway, which also traversed the country from west to east, was inaugurated in 1959. It became a vital route for the transportation of fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, tractors, workers, entrepreneurs, and malaria control teams, all elements that made possible the opening of the coast. Aside from solving the need to connect the production sites to ports and urban centers, the new paved route became an admired scenic highway that offered panoramic ocean views by the beach cliffs of La Libertad, passed through five mountain tunnels, and over the then famous "Golden Bridge" that spanned the Lempa River.[91]

The dirt and gravel roads that serviced rural populations all around the country were also gradually paved as the new highway was being built, and by the end of the 1960s the country's road network had extended well beyond the main urban centers and the two main arteries (the Pan American and the Littoral highways). The network helped to achieve the goal of diversifying the country's economic activities and improved travel, communications, and the life conditions of the working classes in unparalleled ways. Rural towns such as Tecapán, Usulután (where my ancestors were born and where I spent my early years), experienced, for the first time, basic services (water, light and telephone) in the early 1960s, after the road that connected the town with the Pan American

[91] The "Golden Bridge" was a suspension bridge inaugurated in 1953 under Osorio's administration. It was built by John A. Roebling Sons Co. (the historic American company that built the Brooklyn Bridge in 1883). The bridge spanned 2,523 feet, and it was at the time the longest bridge in the Pacific Ocean slope of Latin America. The bridge was destroyed in 1981 by the FMLN in an effort to slow military movements and to destabilize the economy.

Highway was paved around 1955. Roads and basic services facilitated the construction and operation of the first primary school and the first public health clinic, which opened in 1965 and 1975, respectively.

The improvement of the country's harbor system was also strategic for the plans of economic development. According to the report given by the UN technical mission, El Salvador needed to construct a modern port capable of handling the increasing flow of both agricultural and industrial goods.[92] The port of Acajutla was chosen as the site for expansion, and work began in 1956.[93] Funds were initially obtained through loans from the World Bank and, as further expansions were carried out, through the issue of local bonds.[94] The first wharf capable of receiving large ocean vessels was inaugurated in 1961, a second opened in 1970, and a third in 1975.[95] The new port transformed the economic activity in the previously under-exploited coast line. In its first four years of operation the volume of traffic increased from 27,373 to 376,133 tons of merchandise.[96] The town of Acajutla, a once poor fishing town, became a major shipping and industrial center, boasting the most modern port facilities of the country, a cement plant, two oil refineries, and the first chemical fertilizer plant in Central America.[97] For the entire nation, the new port was considered a "gateway to prosperity" as the amounts and types

[92] Ricardo M. Ortíz, *The Harbor System of El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador* (New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954), 84.
[93] "En marcha el puerto de Acajutla," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1956, 23.
[94] "El Salvador Port Borrows," *New York Times,* June 18, 1960.
[95] Comisión Ejecutiva Portuaria, "Historia," https://www.cepa.gob.sv/historia.
[96] These numbers are the total of export and import traffic for the years 1961 and 1965. The increase in traffic during these four years was 1, 274 %. See "Cepa, Acajutla. Comisión Ejecutiva Portuaria Autónoma," *Centroamérica. Integración económica y su Mercado Común. 1951-1967* (San Salvador, ES: Publicidad Integrada Centroamericana, 1967), 159-160.
[97] "El Salvador Port Expects Big Gains," *New York Times,* June 12, 1960.

of merchandise that moved through its docks and warehouses were changing the country's socio-economic and cultural life.[98]

In addition to boosting exports, the new port eventually helped to advance another economic activity that was part of the diversification efforts: the tourism industry. The ability to receive large vessels opened the doors for cruise lines to add El Salvador as a destination. In 1968 the country received its first cruise ship, the M.S. Jason of the Greek Epirotiki Lines, arriving from Los Angeles. Passengers visited the archaeological ruins of El Tazumal, the town of Izalco, the Mountain Hotel that overlooked the Izalco volcano, and the waterpark Los Chorros.[99]

Economic Diversification

At the beginning of the 1950s El Salvador was an agrarian nation. Its economy was based on the revenues generated by a single export commodity: coffee. Just in the decade that preceded Osorio's administration, for example, the crop had been responsible for 80 to 85 percent of the total value of the country's exports.[100] Such monocrop reliance would sometimes put the country at a disadvantage, as socio-economic stability could easily be disrupted by a sharp decline of coffee prices in the world markets.[101] Because of these reasons, the new government deemed it a matter of national interest to diversify the economy. This plan was to be done by expanding the production of other cash crops such as cotton, sugar cane, and corn, through the introduction of new light and heavy

[98] George Turner, *Un análisis de la economía de El Salvador*, trans. Oscar René Lindo (Los Angeles, CA: Publicado por George P. Turner, 1961): 41.
[99] "A First for Acajutla," *Christian Science Monitor*, January 30, 1968.
[100] W.J. Feuerlein, *Proposals*, 12-13.
[101] Such was the case in the early 1930s when the Great Depression caused a drop in coffee prices. This, in turn, led to the 1932 peasant rebellion and massacre known as *The Slaughter*.

manufacturing industries, the development of tourism, and the conversion of the fishing industry into an export enterprise.

The successful take off and eventual realization of these projects was facilitated, paradoxically, thanks to the benevolent economic climate that had resulted from the high prices of coffee in the years after WWII. According to a study that was based on data collected by the technical experts who first visited the country in 1949, El Salvador had a "mildly progressive" fiscal system that allowed for internal financial stability, for a relatively small public debt, and for stable exchange rates and freedom from exchange control.[102] These relatively healthy economic conditions allowed for the collection of

[102] Henry C. Wallich and John H. Adler, *Public Finance in a Developing Country: El Salvador, a Case Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951). Exchange controls are governmental limitations on the purchase and/or sale of currencies. It gives countries economic stability by limiting the amount of exchange rate volatility due to currency inflows/outflows. Countries with weak economies use foreign exchange controls to limit speculation against their currencies. Freedom from foreign exchange controls, thus, signals a stable economy. The fact that El Salvador had no foreign currency control, according to Wallich and Adler, made the country an "almost unique" case in Latin America—a country with a free flow of funds and merchandise. Colón-Dollar exchange rates remained constant in the 1948-1978 period: ₡1.00 = $0.40.

abundant tax revenue and in turn for the re-orientation efforts to be carried out at a fast pace and without major difficulties.[103]

The first important project for agricultural diversification that took place in the decade of the 1950s was the expansion of cotton production. The vast and underexploited coastal lands were deemed by the Point Four and UN technical missions as the suitable site for such enterprise. Many of the owners of these lands—some of which belonged to the country's landed elite—had been attempting to cultivate cotton since 1935, but those attempts had not been as successful as expected because they had lacked modern cultivation techniques, the necessary transportation infrastructure, and a large enough

[103] In 1950 the government passed the "Ley de Impuesto Sobre Exportación del Café," a law that established an "ad-valorem" tax on coffee exports. With this law the percentage of tax was based on the prices of coffee in the international market. As coffee prices had been on the rise since the post WWII years, the government was able to collect abundant tax revenue from that sector. From 1945 to 1955, for example, coffee prices increased fourth fold, and consequentially tax revenues went up from $6.44 to $19.6 million in the 1950-1955 period. In addition to the tax on coffee exports, the government also passed, in 1951, the "Ley de Impuesto Sobre la Renta" (income tax), which established higher rates for large private incomes and for business earnings. Surprisingly, there was no significant opposition from the economic elites for the new taxes. A variety of sources indicate that President Osorio's ability to negotiate with everyone made the upper classes adopt an amicable relationship with the leader, despite the heavy taxes he introduced. René Suárez, an architect that participated in many of the infrastructure projects developed in the early 1950s expressed his admiration for Osorio's people skills. In a 2011 interview for the digital newspaper ElFaro.net, he said "When he died, he died with no money, and all those rich people paid for his funeral, because they loved him. There were contradictory things that I could never understand. How it was possible that he was hard on them, he took from them, he imposed taxes, and they loved him!" Sources: Consejo de Gobierno Revolucionario, Decreto No. 836, "Ley del Impuesto Sobre la Exportación de Café," *Diario Oficial*, 149, no. 200 (Septiembre 13, 1950): 3231, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/1950/1950-2T/1950-2T_Parte22.pdf., Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 1307, "Reformas a la Ley de Impuesto Sobre la Renta," *Diario Oficial*, 161, no. 233 (Diciembre 22, 1953): 9009, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/1953/1953-3T/1953-3T_Parte39.pdf., World Bank, *Current Economic Situation and Prospects of El Salvador* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1958), Table 32., *Historia de El Salvador. Tomo II*, 187., and Carlos Dada, "Plática con René Suárez, ingeniero y arquitecto. Cuando terminamos el Cerro Verde se nos apagó el volcán," *El Faro.net*, January 9, 2011. https://elfaro.net/es/201101/el_agora/3336/"Cuando-terminamos-el-Cerro-Verde-se-nos-apagó-el-volcán".htm.

labor pool.[104] After 1948, the State became a key promotor for the development of these areas as it provided the growers with infrastructure, fiscal incentives, technical advice, credit, and by serving as business mediator for all cotton producers and buyers.[105] The State also worked to attract the needed labor pool by sanitizing the area through anti-malaria campaigns and rural colonization programs.

All of these new elements of economic support boosted production. For example, membership of the Cooperativa Algodonera had increased from 564 growers in 1942 to 1903 by 1951. The land dedicated to cultivation of the crop rose from 12,900 hectares in 1945 to 43,000 in 1960.[106] The number of tractors working on the haciendas and smaller farms went up from 304 in 1949 to a total of 1392 (428 caterpillar tractors included) in 1960.[107] The contribution of cotton to the total value of exports also jumped from 1.5 in 1945 to 15.1 percent in 1960. Two years later, the value had increased to 23.7 percent, a number that made coffee figures shrink from 85 to 55.8 percent of total exports, and that turned cotton in to the country's second export cash-crop.[108] Even though cotton production was an enterprise that only strengthened the status of El Salvador as an

[104] The coastal lands in those days were ridden with malaria and yellow fever, and thus were not much attractive for people seeking work. Aside from the areas around the three existing ports, the coast was an isolated sector that had no paved roads, no clinics, and no schools. Typically, the people who lived there did so as laborers or sharecroppers in absentee-landowner- haciendas that raised cattle, corn, sugar cane, and vegetables. The production of these haciendas was just enough to sell in local markets and sustain the landowner and the laborers. The State's anti-malaria campaign began in 1949 (and is further explored in the section on social programs). See Ridgway Satterthwaite, "Campesino Agriculture and Hacienda Modernization in Coastal El Salvador: 1949-1969" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971), 87-94.
[105] All cotton growers had to have a government license and be members of the Cooperativa Algodonera Salvadoreña. This organization facilitated information, seeds, credits, and it controlled commercialization of the product in both local and foreign markets.
[106] Héctor Dada, *La Economía de El Salvador y la Integración Centroamericana* (San Salvador, ES: UCA Editores, 1978), 31.
[107] Satterthwaite, "Campesino Agriculture,"131. Caterpillar tractors provide better adhesion and lower ground pressure than the regular (called "wheeled") tractors do. They were specialized machinery used to lay tracks on irregular ground or soil. The introduction of these by the cotton growers evidences the intensification of land use.
[108] Dada, *La Economía de El Salvador*, 31.

agrarian nation, it still was a significant activity that showed an actual effort to depart from total reliance on revenues derived from coffee production.

The agricultural revolution that started with cotton gradually extended to other crops, and even though it did not develop with the same speed as cotton, it eventually helped to reduce the importation of staple crops like rice, and beans, but also to begin exporting sugar cane and corn. The use of disease resistance varieties of sugar cane, for example, eventually helped the sugar industry to produce, in 1970, the 155 million kilograms that fulfilled the local needs plus 145 million kilograms for the export market.[109] Likewise, corn growers started planting a variety developed by U.S. and Salvadoran technicians that increased production from twelve to forty-five-plus bushels per acre, and by 1970 such production had fulfilled the internal need of 620 million kilograms and produced a surplus of 1.15 million kilograms that were exported.[110]

Growers of other crops also realized that modernized farming could help them transition from subsistence into commercial production, and they began to seek ways to improve yields. The government also took steps to extend the success of cotton to other farmers by offering the knowledge and resources that had been given to the cotton growers. Since information was a crucial resource, the government sought to bring more foreign technical experts and to establish an educational institution that would help create a pool of local professionals in the field. In 1954 the government signed an Agreement of Technical Cooperation for Agricultural Development with the United States.[111] With the help provided by the foreign experts, growers of potatoes, cabbage, green peppers,

---

[109] *El Salvador. Zonificación Agrícola. Fase I* (Washington, DC: OAS, 1974), 57.
[110] *El Salvador. Zonificación Agrícola. Fase I,* 76.
[111] US Department of State, *Agreement of a Cooperative Program for Agricultural Development Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of El Salvador*," United States Treaties and Other International Agreements 3089 (Washington, DC, 1954).

carrots, tomatoes, pumpkins, and other vegetables began to see a boom in production, and learned ways to expand their markets beyond their usual stalls in their villages.[112]

While knowledge was being disseminated through the foreign mission, the government created a scholarship program to send agricultural students abroad with the goal of establishing an educational institution and strengthening the local base of technical knowledge.[113] This project was fulfilled in 1956 with the inauguration of the National School of Agriculture, which helped the nation continue towards the goal of modernization without having to rely completely on foreign technical missions. [114]

The boom in the cotton industry was the catalyst for the country's general modernization of farming and also for the initiation of the project for industrialization. Before 1950 the agrarian nature of the country had only allowed for two types of basic industries: native crafts and small manufacturing. Native crafts produced mostly textiles, earthenware, and leather goods. The small manufacturing enterprises produced goods such as refined sugar, cigarettes, furniture, liquors, hats, light implements, vegetable oils, candles, and henequen bags for the coffee industry. The candle industry was of particular importance since, at the time, the majority of the population still depended on candles for lighting.[115] Henequen was also important as coffee beans were transported exclusively in bags made with this fiber. There were no heavy industries, and the portion of the gross

[112] Kathleen Mclaughlin, "El Salvador Gets Farming Lesson," *New York Times,* August 28, 1955.
[113] Until 1956, the technical experts of agricultural missions had set up their operations at an experimental station known as Centro Nacional de Agronomía, which had been established in 1942. The goals of the station were to conduct research and share knowledge on modern agricultural techniques. The outreach capacity of the station, however, could not fulfill the high demand for training, and thus an institution especially dedicated to agricultural education was planned.
[114] "Escuela Nacional de Agricultura ha Sido Inaugurada en El Salvador" *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1956, 30. Even with the new school the needs were not completely fulfilled and technical missions continued to cooperate with El Salvador's agricultural development well into the 1970s.
[115] Curtis M. Wilson, "El Salvador. A Geographic Reconnaissance," *The Journal of Geography* 48 (1949): 193-196, http://login.ezproxy.lib.umn.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezp2.lib.umn.edu/scholarly-journals/el-salvador-geographic-reconnaissance/docview/58708523/se-2?accountid=14586.

national product generated by the existing manufacturing enterprises amounted to only 14.55 percent in 1950.[116]

Large scale cotton production, however, ushered many changes that led towards industrialization. The introduction of new machinery and transportation vehicles, for example, generated the need for fuel and replacement parts. Good yields also depended on the purchase of large quantities of fertilizer, herbicides and insecticides. The maintenance of the new roads and bridges required tools, asphalt, gravel, paint, etc. Ports operations needed steel and a variety of other materials, electrification and telecommunications needed cooper, and the construction of new infrastructure needed cement. In summary, El Salvador, in the early 1950s had embarked on a process of change that required large imports of materials to maintain and expand the improvements that had recently been created. Such need represented an opportunity for the country to satisfy those needs and further advance the plans of economic diversification thru industrialization.

As it had been done with agriculture, serious steps towards industrialization were taken after an assessment of resources was conducted and advice on possible routes was suggested. The chief recommendations of the UN technical experts were: (1) the establishment of a Development Corporation that would help conduct research on possible industrial projects and grant loans to willing entrepreneurs; (2) the restructuring of the tariff system to offer fiscal incentives for local and foreign investment; (3) the use of legislative reforms to encourage more local investment; (4) the economic integration and collaboration with the other Central American countries; and (5) the expansion of industrialization by establishing plants dedicated to activities such as flour milling, dry

[116] Henry C. Wallich and John H. Adler, *Public Finance*, 25.

milk production, textile processing, cement production, and the manufacture of metal products such as small tools, nails, and steel pipe.[117]

As before with the construction of new infrastructure and the modernization of agriculture, some initial steps towards industrialization were taken before the reports of the technical experts were handed to the government in 1951. One of those early steps was the establishment of the local cement industry. The production of cement was foreseen since the early days of the Revolution of 1948 as a key industry that would aid in the development of infrastructure, and therefore the Revolutionary Council passed in 1949 a decree giving a series of attractive prerogatives to cement production enterprises that would begin operations before 1965. [118] The incentives included duty-free import of all equipment and construction materials required for plant facilities and freedom of export tariffs for the cement produced at these plants. These incentives attracted the attention of a group of ten Salvadoran investors who saw possibilities for economic profit in the reform projects of the new State. The same year the decree was passed they raised the money to construct a cement plant and hired the American firms Allis-Chalmers to provide the necessary equipment and the MacDonald Engineering Company to draft the blue-prints and direct the construction of the plant. Construction began in 1951 in the port town of Acajutla, a strategic location in the plans for future development. The plant, Cemento de El Salvador S.A., (CESSA), opened in 1953 with an initial output of 900 barrels of cement powder per day, which supplied the ongoing needs of the first

[117] Bert F. Hoselitz, *Industrial Development in El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador* (New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954), 4-7.
[118] Consejo de Gobierno Revolucionario, Decreto No. 188, "Prerrogativas y Obligaciones Para las Fábricas de Cemento," *Diario Oficial*, 147, no.147 (Julio 5, 1949): 2411, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/1949/1949-2T/1949-2T_Parte2.pdf .

hydroelectric plant, the construction of schools, clinics, housing projects, and other public works.[119]

After the report of the UN technical mission was given, the government continued creating more legislation to encourage investment in industrialization projects. In May 1952, the Legislative Assembly passed the Law to Foment Industries of Transformation, which aimed at extending the prerogatives given to the cement enterprises to all other industrial entrepreneurs that would establish industries deemed either "necessary" or "convenient" for the nation. In addition to extend the duty-free privileges for importing the necessary equipment and materials to establish an industry, the law also granted tax reductions on property, sales, and income for five years.[120]

These incentives immediately began to attract foreign interests. Just one year after the new law was passed the country saw the opening of its first instant coffee factory, Productos de Café S.A. This plant was established with technology provided by the American instant coffee company Tenco and with capital from the International Basic Economy Corporation (a Rockefeller company) and a group of Salvadoran investors.[121] The instant coffee plant was significant in the efforts for economic diversification because it was a new strategy for the commercialization of the country's main export crop. Production of soluble coffee meant the country was no longer only an exporter of

---

[119] "El Salvador se Industrializa. El Cemento es ya un Producto Nacional," *Informaciones de El Salvador*, Febrero 14, 1953,12-16.

[120] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 661, "Ley de Fomento de Industrias de Transformación," *Diario Oficial*, 155, no. 102 (Mayo 30, 1952): 3726, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/1952/1952-2T/1952-2T_Parte14.pdf. According to this law, "necessary" industries were those that would satisfy basic needs of the population (such as food, textiles, housing), and "convenient" were those that would help transform the economy and generate a significant number of jobs.

[121] The IBEC was a private business enterprise founded in 1947 by Nelson A. Rockefeller. The Corporation focused on upgrading the "basic economies" of underdeveloped countries. The goals were to create businesses that were profitable and sustainable and to encourage the establishment of competitive practices to the partner nations. See IBEC. Biographical/Historical Note. The Online Collections and Catalog of Rockefeller Archive Center. https://dimes.rockarch.org.

raw coffee beans, but also an exporter of a finished commodity that was becoming popular in the purchasing nations. The plant helped El Salvador to industrialize its main export crop, and to compete directly with transnational coffee-processing corporations.

In addition to providing a new commercial strategy for the export market, the arrival of soluble coffee helped to give the Salvadoran working classes more access to the drink they helped produced but that often times was prohibitive due to its high price. This began in 1957, when the government along with the Association of Coffee producers of El Salvador proposed to institute the "coffee break" among the employees of banks and commercial and industrial businesses.[122] This proposal aimed at making use of the excess coffee that could not be sold in the international markets. The initiative resulted in the creation of an instant coffee brand name for the domestic market, Café Lísto. The affordability of the new product allowed the working classes to gradually abandon the coffee substitutes that they had been using since the late nineteenth century because coffee—especially good quality coffee—was a paradoxically scarce and expensive product in the nation's export-oriented economy.[123]

---

[122] "La Pausa del Café," *El Café de El Salvador*, Mayo 27, 1959, 159-130, and Charles Hillinger, "Life in El Salvador Geared to Coffee Crop. World's Third Largest Producer Seeks to Persuade Natives to Use Better Brands," *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1957.

[123] Since it became the pillar of the economy in the late nineteenth century, coffee was seen as "the golden grain" that brought sustenance to the nation, and thus it was a product mainly to sell abroad, not to consume. The little coffee that remained for domestic consumption was of the lowest quality beans that had been picked at the end of the harvest (called the "café de resaca"), and the coffee that had fallen on the ground and was picked up once it was dry after the harvest (called "café de pepena"). The first was often used for the consumption of plantation owners (small and big holders) and for sale in the domestic markets of cities. The second was usually picked up by peasants and served for personal consumption through the year. Since the quantities available were very small, the peasant classes resorted to mixing the little coffee they had picked up from the ground with other grains in order to make it last until the next harvest. Other times, they even created coffee substitutes with toasted corn, sorghum, beans, and cinnamon. The introduction of Café Lísto in the local market allowed the working classes to have "real" coffee for the first time and also led to the gradual adoption and preference of soluble coffee. Nowadays, more than fifty nine percent of coffee drinkers in El Salvador consume instant coffee. See *Estudio Diagnóstico Sobre el Consumo del Café en El Salvador* (San Salvador, ES: Consejo Salvadoreño del Café, 2008), 11.

The new legislation attracted the attention of American investors as well as investors from other countries. In 1955, for example, the Japanese Kureha Spinning Company arranged with Salvadoran investors to establish a cotton spinning enterprise. For its fifty per cent share, Kureha provided all the machinery and technical personnel for the construction and initial operations of the plant. Industrias Unidas S.A. (IUSA) opened in 1956 and it was, at the time, the largest and most modern textile factory in Central America (total investment cost was $2.5M US).[124] The plant employed 600 workers, housed 25,296 spindles, 264 weaving machines, and was using Salvadoran cotton exclusively.[125]

Business relations with Japan increased during the remaining years of the 1950s and throughout the following two decades. Japanese purchases of Salvadoran cotton made the balance of trade between the two countries lean in favor of El Salvador from 1954 until 1968.[126] To compensate for the imbalance, Japanese technology was introduced to El Salvador, helping with the plans for modernization. In 1959, for example, when the government of El Salvador announced its intentions to expand its electrification program, Hitachi won the international bidding to supply the needed turbines and generators.[127] In 1963, after a formal Agreement on Commerce was signed between the two countries, Salvadorans began to see the arrival of Japanese household electronics, farm equipment, ironware, paint and plastic manufacturing machinery, and semi-finished fishing boats, among other things. Japan also supported El Salvador in 1964 with the initial efforts of the government in establishing a national program of

[124] 2.5 million dollars in 1955 equal about 23.8 million dollars in 2019.
[125] Harvey Gardiner, "The Japanese in Central America," *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 14, no. 1 (1972):26-27, http://www.jstor.com/stable/174980.
[126] Harvey Gardiner, "The Japanese," 28-42.
[127] Ibid, 29.

televised education. The government of Japan helped by providing information about Japan's own educational television system (NHK), by conducting a technical study about the installation needs, and by providing preliminary training.[128]

As new factories like Productos de Café and IUSA were being established, the government continued creating bases of support to expand the efforts of economic diversification. In 1955, for example, the development corporation advised by the UN technical mission was established as the Instituto Salvadoreño de Fomento de la Producción (INSAFOP).[129] The main goals of that entity were to provide more assistance in the economic diversification efforts, to foment employment generating activities, to procure and facilitate technical information for possible entrepreneurs, to grant loans for the establishment or the expansion of industries, to acquire equipment and other industrial needs to either rent or sell under favorable terms to starting industries, and to carry out the necessary activities to disseminate knowledge about efficient methods of production. Regarding the advice for legislation to promote local investment given by the UN mission, the government created a law that aimed to reduce hoarding—the custom of the Salvadoran economic elites to deposit their inherited fortunes and accumulate their profits in foreign banks. This was a practice partly due to an inheritance tax law on bank deposits. In an effort to draw those fortunes back into circulation, the law was modified exempting bank deposits from that particular tax levy.[130]

---

[128] Ibid, 36-37, and Wilbur Schramm, *Instructional Television in the Educational Reform of El Salvador* (Washington, DC: Information Center on Instructional Technology, 1973): 12.
[129] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 1939, "Ley de Creación del Instituto Salvadoreño de Fomento de la Producción," *Diario Oficial* 169, no. 197 (Octubre 26, 1955):7895, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1955/10-octubre/octubre-1955_Parte20.pdf.
[130] "El Salvador Votes Economic Reforms," *New York Times*, January 27, 1957.

The conjunction of the success in the expansion of cotton production, the ongoing process of agricultural modernization, the new infrastructural resources, the apparent successful establishment of large industrial plants, and the set of fiscal incentives created by the government, resulted, by the end of the decade, in an increase in the interest of local economic elites to invest in the emerging industrial activities. This interest led to the organization of some of the existing private manufacturing enterprises into a formal association dedicated to look after their own interests and collaborate with the government's plans for industrial growth. In June 1958, representatives of thirty-one private industrial firms established the Asociación Salvadoreña de Industriales (ASI). The new support from local investment groups along with the interests of foreign firms strengthened the bases and accelerated the process of industrialization. In the following decade, for example the number of industrial plants increased from 258 in 1960 to 1282 in 1970.[131]

One of the last milestones in the industrial development efforts of the 1950s was the acquisition of the country's first electric blast furnace. The equipment was purchased from a Swiss firm by a Salvadoran private enterprise with half of the total costs (200,000 dollars) loaned by the INSAFOP. With this equipment the country was no longer completely dependent on imports for its metal needs, as it had the capability of producing 2,500 tons of steel a year. This volume represented one third of the country's needs for metal and was used mainly for concrete reinforcement bars and other construction purposes.[132]

---

[131] *Anuario Estadístico. 1960*, (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1962):151-152, and *Anuario Estadístico. 1970,* (San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1971), 1.
[132] "Industry Helped by El Salvador: More Than $800,000 Lent This Year in Drive to Increase Output," *New York Times*, October 19, 1958.

In addition to the legislative and economic support bases that were set for the expansion of industrial activity, the government also followed the recommendations of the technical experts and sought to establish economic co-operation with the other Central American countries in order to secure a large-enough market to sell the anticipated higher industrial production to. In March 1951, the government signed a bilateral trade agreement with Nicaragua that aimed at eliminating tariffs on products that were "natural" to each of the countries.[133] This agreement was followed with similar bilateral agreements with Guatemala in December of the same year, with Costa Rica in December 1953, and with Honduras in March 1957.[134] Also, in September 1951, the government of El Salvador called a conference to study the possibilities of economic unification of the Central American Nations. The Salvadoran initiative was met with much enthusiasm and, in October of the same year, the Foreign Ministers of the governments of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica signed the "Carta de San Salvador," establishing the Organización de Estados Centroamericanos (ODECA)—which aimed at promoting cooperation and integration among the participating countries.[135] Even though the goals of integration were stalled for most of the decade (due in part to the political changes that happened in Guatemala that resulted in the overthrow of Jacobo Arbenz in 1954), the members of the ODECA began, since 1956, to establish a series of trade compromises that eventually led to the creation, in

[133] "Tratado de Libre Comercio Entre las Repúblicas de El Salvador y Nicaragua," *Informaciones de El Salvador*, Abril 14, 1951, 13-32.
[134] The trade agreement with Honduras in 1957 was in fact a revision of an existing trade agreement between the two countries that had been established since 1918. See "La Politica Comercial de El Salvador," *Informaciones de El Salvador*, Septiembre 14, 1952, 11-13.
[135] Sandas Lorenzo Harrison, "The Role of El Salvador in the Drive for Unity in Central America" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1962), 173.

1960, of the Multilateral Treaty of Free Trade and Central American Economic Integration—creating the Central American Common Market of the 1960s.

Although the expansion and diversification of agriculture and the introduction of manufacturing industries were the two most important projects of economic reform that were carried out in the 1950s, the government also set the bases for other ventures that, even though they did not develop in the scale expected, still carried much significance: the fishing and the tourism industries. Before 1950, fishing in El Salvador was done either for subsistence or to supply local markets. Fishing activities were carried out by individual fishermen who used rudimentary equipment and fishing facilities. The relative isolation of the coast, the lack of icing facilities and of an efficient distribution system made fish a product relatively scarce for the general population. In 1952, for example, Salvadorans were consuming an average of half a pound of fish products per year.[136] Due to the limitations in production and distribution, fish was consumed mostly by the working classes who lived close to the coast or to other fishing sites and by the privileged classes.[137] With the opening of the littoral areas, the improvements of highways and the availability of electricity, the prospects for fishing as a commercial and export enterprise increased greatly. The fundamental needs to modernize fishing included: an assessment of the types and quantities of fish available in Salvadoran waters, deep sea vessels, refrigeration facilities, and the organization of the fishing activities into cooperatives or companies. The government took the first step in assessing the possibilities with the help of a Point Four technician, who started to study the Salvadoran waters in April 1952. The

[136] "Diez y Ocho Millones de Libras de Pescado Puede dar la Industria Pesquera Salvadoreña," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14,1952, 4, and Kathryn H. Willie, *Central America as a Market and Competitor for U.S. Agriculture* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1959),3.
[137] John Thompson, "The Fisheries Industries of El Salvador," *Journal of Inter-American Studies,* 3, no.3 (1961):437, https://www.jstor.org/stable/164848.

study determined that the Salvadoran waters had the potential of a sustained yield of 14.8 million pounds of fish per year without harming long time production.[138] Shrimp, also, was determined to be the product with the most potential for export purposes due to its abundance in the eastern part of the coast and the demand for this product in the U.S. market. With these prospects in mind the government began to stimulate the fishing industry by helping to establish the first fishing cooperatives in the towns of Acajutla and El Tamarindo. The cooperatives acquired larger boats, contracts with hospitals and other government entities and obtained sanitation and literacy projects for their communities.[139]

By the late 1950s individual fishing had started to give way to larger-scale enterprises that focused on export production. In 1959 the Salvadoran industrial fishing fleet had 18 registered vessels that worked mainly in the eastern part of the coast where shrimp banks had been found, and were producing 623,764 pounds of shrimp for the export market—a 4-fold increase since large scale shrimp export operations began in 1957 with 146,000 pounds.[140] Operations increased in the following decade with the introduction of refrigeration facilities and canning plants which generated employment for 1400 workers.[141] Although the fishing industry fell short of its imagined potential, the initiatives taken in the 1950s established a significant foundation for expansion. In the 21st century, for example, shrimp fishing remains the main industrial fishing enterprise of the country. In addition, the initial steps towards large-scale commercialization helped to

[138] Leroy S. Christey and Charles B. Wade, "Los Recursos Comerciales Pesqueros de El Salvador. Reporte Preliminar. 1952," (San Salvador, ES: Ministerio de Economía, 1959): 1.
[139] "Elocuentes Discursos al Inaugurarse la Primera Cooperativa de Pescadores en el Puerto de Acajutla," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Julio 14,1951, 6-7, and "Alimentación y Riqueza Para los Salvadoreños. Cooperativa de Pescadores, Garantía Económica Para la Patria," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1955, 47-48.
[140] John Thompson, "The Fisheries Industries," 438.
[141] *Anuario Estadístico. 1970,* (San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1971), 31.

make fish protein a more available and affordable food product among the working classes.

The last major economic reform project that was established in the 1950s was the creation of the tourist industry. The plans for this sector were significant because they opened the country to foreign visitors and, for the first time, invited Salvadorans to know and enjoy their own country. Before 1948 El Salvador had no organized tourism industry. Although the first National Tourism Board had been created in 1924, no concrete measures had been taken beyond promoting the natural beauties of the country through the Salvadoran consulates abroad.[142] The country's natural sites had the potential to attract foreign visitors but there was no infrastructure to accommodate them. The port system, for example, had been designed mainly for trade purposes, and El Salvador did not appear as a destination for cruise lines. The surface transportation routes, although considered efficient for the coffee trade, did not offer adequate connection points with the neighboring countries, did not offer amenities for leisure travel, and in many instances were not adequate enough to comfortably reach sites of interest. Finally, the Ilopango airport was being served by only two international airlines, Pan American World Airways and Transportes Aereos Centro Americanos.[143] Foreign travelers who visited San Salvador, therefore, consisted mostly of business entrepreneurs and diplomatic representatives who stayed at either of the only two hotels that offered modern

[142] Jorge Barraza Ibarra, *Perspectivas y Tendencias del Turismo en El Salvador. 1930-2008* (San Salvador, ES: Universidad Gerardo Barrios Editores, 2011), 77-78.
[143] W.J. Feuerlein, *Proposals,* 31., and Curtis M. Wilson, *El Salvador,* 189.

accommodations, the Hotel Nuevo Mundo, built in 1920, and the Hotel Astoria, which had been operating since 1875.[144]

With these facts in mind, the Government Council decided in 1949 to re-organize and give full support to the Tourism Board for the construction of leisure sites that would establish a base for an efficient tourist industry. According to René Suárez, the architect who was in charge of most of the initial ventures, the State's philosophy behind the projects was that, since the country was not equipped to receive international visitors, then internal tourism should be developed to satisfy the leisure needs of Salvadorans and to serve as an initial base for a larger tourism industry in future years.[145] This philosophy led to the creation of a series of tourists sites that not only became emblematic of the country to the eyes of foreign visitors, but that became rooted in the local popular imaginary.

The new tourism projects were carried out under the direction of Raúl Contreras, a diplomatic official, playwright and founder of La Casa de la Cultura de San Salvador (a meeting place/library for intellectuals, students, and literature aficionados of the time). After being named President of the Tourism Board in 1949, Contreras procured the help of the architect René Suárez and the collaboration of artists such as sculptor Valentín Estrada and writer Salarrué, among others, and began to develop leisure sites for the enjoyment of common Salvadorans. In the following decade they created the Planes de Renderos and the Puerta del Diablo observation sites, The Balboa Natural Reserve Park,

[144] Jorge Barraza Ibarra, *Perspectivas,* 68. There were also two smaller hotels in the western city of Santa Ana, and two in the eastern city of San Miguel.
[145] Carlos Dada, "Plática con René Suárez."

the waterparks Apulo, Atecozol, Ichanmichen, Amapulapa and Los Chorros, and the Cerro Verde Mountain Hotel. [146]

The accessibility of these sites to the working classes quickly turned them into beloved elements of national pride. The waterpark Apulo, for example, was located just ten miles from San Salvador, and was serviced by a dedicated bus route. Located along the shore of Lake Ilopango, it offered two shore side pools, a beach, a pier, a garden, boat trips, and various food establishments. For many San Salvadorans, Apulo was the first beach they ever knew since, at the time, it was more accessible than the nearest ocean beaches located in La Libertad. The waterpark became so popular that it inspired a song by the most famous and historic tropical music group in El Salvador, the Hermanos Flores. The song, "Apulo, mamá," was first released in 1972, and is still played on the radio and remains a requested song during the group's performances.[147] Like Apulo, the Planes de Renderos observation deck and typical food area became an obligatory stop for both local and foreign tourists. The site offers a scenic overlook of the city of San Salvador and is in close proximity to the Balboa Natural Reserve Park and to the Puerta del Diablo hiking trails and scenic overlooks. An outstanding characteristic of all these leisure sites is that they contained sculptures allusive to the indigenous past, which, due to the events of 1932, Salvadorans had started to forget. The waterparks, principally, had sculptures of the Nahuatl gods Tlaloc, Chiutetl and Tamatelcusa, the mythical Siguanaba and her son Cipitío, and the indigenous chief warrior Atonal (who, according to the

[146] Jorge Barraza Ibarra, *Perspectivas*, 89.
[147] Los Hermanos Flores, "Apulo Mamá," by Gilberto Pineda, vocalist Fredy Mena, recorded 1972, track 4 on *La Fiesta*, Ambiente AMD 23, 33⅓ rpm.vThe Hermanos Flores band was founded in 1964 and it is still active today.

legend, crippled with an arrow the Spanish conquistador Pedro de Alvarado at the historic battle of Acajutla), among others.[148]

In addition to the projects carried out by the Tourism Board, the State also supported through other governmental entities the rehabilitation of the Tazumal indigenous ruins and the construction of an on-site archaeological museum, the conversion of the horse-track Campo Marte into the Parque Infantil (a children's theme park), the creation of the National Zoological Park, the National Gymnasium, and the construction of other public recreation facilities such as La Chacra, and the Balneario Obrero Doctor Humberto Romero Alvergue (fig. 2.2)—a sea-side waterpark made specifically for the enjoyment of workers/laborers who were members of cooperatives or trade unions.[149]

By the late 1950s tourism plans had started to expand as new transportation infrastructure began to attract foreign visitors. One of the first projects with this new vision was the Cerro Verde Mountain Hotel and Natural Reserve Park. The site was built in the Cerro Verde volcano, at 2030 meters above sea level. The main goal of the project was to offer visitors the opportunity to enjoy an up-close view of the Izalco volcano—named the "Lighthouse of the Pacific" due to its continuous eruption that, at night, often served as a guide to boats navigating on the Pacific Ocean. The hotel was opened in 1957 and offered observation decks for the volcanoes of Izalco, Ilamatepec, and for lake Coatepeque (fig. 2.3).

[148] Jorge Barraza Ibarra, *Perspectivas*, 94-97.
[149] "El Salvador. Un Rincón Turístico de Centro America," *Informaciones de El Salvador*, Febrero 14, 1953,31, and Carlos Alberto Argumedo, "Paraiso Tropical Para Obreros," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Abril 14, 1955, 36-37. By 1963 there were already three such recreation centers in the country.

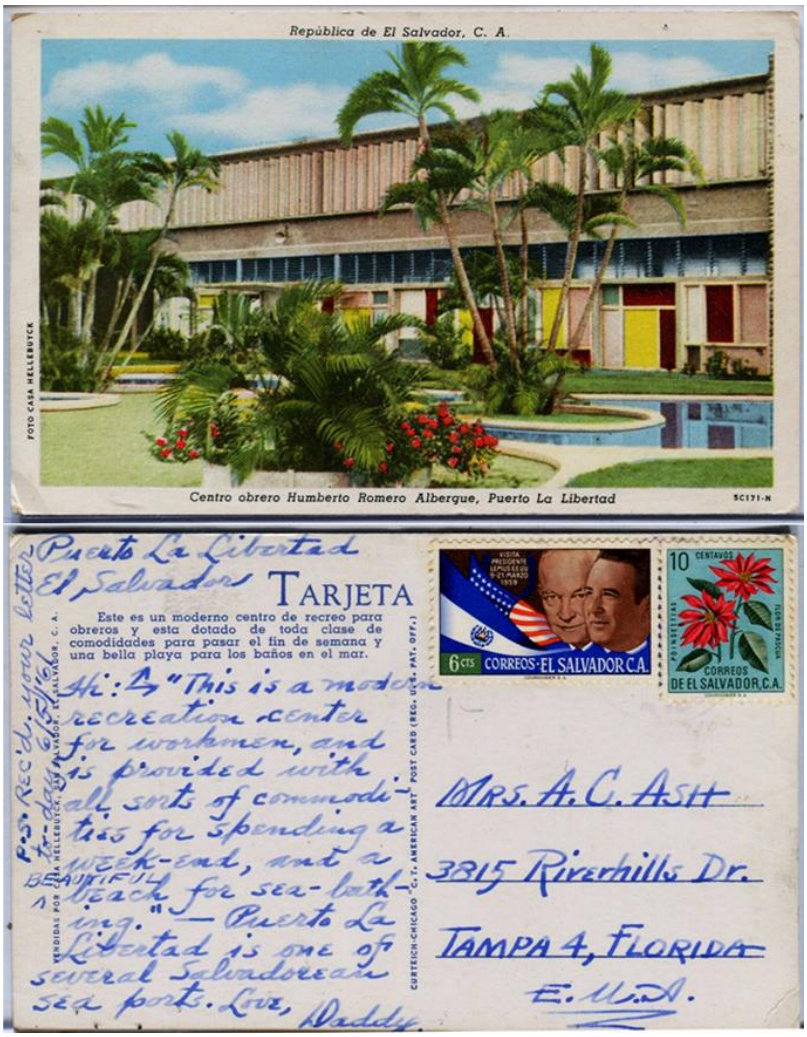


Figure 2.2. Vintage postcard of El Salvador, purchased on eBay on 03/22/2020. It features an image of the Humberto Romero Albergue Worker's Recreation Center, built and maintained by the State since 1953 through its Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social. The place was available to workers and their families at the request of their respective trade union or cooperative. The sender dated the postcard 06/05/1961 and in the message he briefly expressed his admiration for the center's modern installations.

Beginning in 1955 the government passed legislation to start attracting international visitors. Legislative Decree No. 1827 created the Special Tourism Card, which eliminated the need for a visa and entrance fee requirements to leisure visitors

from any of the nations of the American continent and Europe. The card allowed its holders to bypass the often slow customs paperwork at ports of entry, to remain in the country for ninety days, and could also be used as an identification document.[150]

The last base for the tourism industry that was set by the government in the decade of the 1950s was the construction of the El Salvador Intercontinental Hotel. This was a luxury establishment located in the elite neighborhood Colonia Escalón. It was inaugurated in 1958, and it catered to the growing stream of American leisure and business visitors. The Intercontinental offered 210 modern rooms, restaurant, bar, sports facilities, swimming pool, and other amenities.[151]

By 1960, El Salvador had established a solid foundation for the tourism industry. Hotel accommodations had increased and improved, a total of ten airlines serviced the Ilopango airport (which was under expansion), and the new highway network allowed visitors access to the country's beaches, lakes, mountain resorts, pre-Hispanic ruins, and waterparks that had been built for leisure activities.[152] Although these accomplishments were only an initial phase and tourism had not yet become a major economic activity, the work of the Tourism Board achieved significant results—the working classes, for the first time, were provided with leisure sites and were encouraged to develop a culture of travel within the national borders to enjoy the natural beauties of their own nation.

---

[150] "Tarjeta Para el Turismo Creada en El Salvador," *Informaciones de El Salvador*, Junio 14, 1955,32.
[151] Henry Hagans Kelly, *Tourist Facilities on the Inter-American Highway* (Washington, D.C: International Cooperation Administration, 1960), 32.
[152] George Turner, *Un análisis de la economía de El Salvador*, trans. Oscar René Lindo (Los Angeles, CA: Publicado por George P. Turner, 1961): 38.

Figure 2.3. Observation deck for the Izalco volcano at the Cerro Verde Mountain Hotel. Source: "El Salvador 1971," (San Salvador: Departamento de Relaciones Públicas. Casa Presidencial, 1971), 195.

Social Reforms

Along with the political and economic reform programs came also the projects to improve the living standards of the population. The government's efforts towards these goals stemmed from the second article of the new Constitution, which stated that it was the obligation of the government "to ensure to the inhabitants of the Republic the enjoyment of liberty, health, culture, economic well-being, and social justice." Following that notion, the social areas that received the most attention in the 1950s were labor, health, housing, and education.

As with other projects, concrete measures to carry out social reforms began quickly and were also based on the advice given by Point Four and UN technical experts. The first area that received attention was labor. The new Constitution's section titled "Labor and Social Security" stipulated innovative labor conditions such as paid maternity

leave before and after childbirth (Art. 184), compensation for victims of work accidents or occupational diseases (Art. 185), compulsory Social Security(Art. 187), the right to organize trade unions (Art. 192), the right to strike (Art. 193), and the right to file a labor dispute and receive a rapid resolution (Art.194). Since the country lacked a Labor Code, the makers of the new Constitution also set the basis for the creation of one with directives towards laws for the establishment of a minimum wage, the elimination of payment in kind, the granting of social benefits, a bonus payment for each year of labor, the eight-hour workday, extra remuneration for overtime, paid holidays, annual paid vacations, and severance pay. These directives were gradually turned into laws and were finally compiled in the country's first Labor Code in 1963.[153]

The set of labor laws established in the new Constitution and those gradually passed through the decade were groundbreaking. For the first time in the country's history laborers were able to officially organize into trade unions, to file legal disputes, to strike, and to be provided with medical and other insurance benefits by their employers.[154] The effect of these new conditions was significant. Just one year after the Constitution was passed, for example, workers had organized into twenty-six trade unions with a total of 5,941 members.[155] After one decade, the number of trade unions had increased to 93, and membership totaled 28,000.[156]

The new policies also established a new type of relationship between employers and workers in the urban centers. Before 1950 their relationship was similar to that in the

[153] US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Law and Practice in El Salvador,* BLS Report No. 280 (Washington, DC: The Division, 1965), 18.
[154] Although, as I show in further sections, there were several projects for the improvement of life conditions of agricultural workers, these were not granted the rights to unionize, to establish a legal dispute against their employers, and the social security system was not available to them.
[155] Carlos Guillén, *Labor Institutes in El Salvador* (Washington, DC: Inter-American Economic and Social Council, Pan American Union, 1957), 1.
[156] *Labor Law and Practice,* 22.

countryside between hacienda owners and their laborers. Employers did not have the legal obligation to provide their workers with any benefits beyond wages, and work conflicts usually ended with the employee being terminated without severance pay. The new laws gave workers a degree of protection that helped them fight against those types of injustices and to obtain better working conditions. They also made employers improve their disposition to reach mutually satisfactory agreements with workers.

In addition to the new legislation, the government also created new institutions to support the labor laws and help improve the living standards of workers. The two main entities that charged with these tasks were the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and the Salvadoran Social Security Institute. The Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare oversaw the general implementation of labor legislation and supervised the compliance of safety conditions in the workplace to reduce accidents and work-related illnesses.[157] The Salvadoran Social Security Institute was a social insurance program for public and private employees that provided coverage for sickness, occupational illnesses, accidents, maternity, and death. The program was financed by contributions from employers, employees, and the government. It began operations in 1954, and during its initial years, covered mostly employees in the capital city San Salvador and in the coastal areas were industrial jobs were growing (such as the port areas of La Libertad and Acajutla). By 1963, however, it was estimated that there were 2,741 employers who had registered a total of 112,889 employees and 181,225 dependents in the system.[158] Expansion of

[157] "Primer Instituto de Previsión y Seguridad Social en El Salvador," *Informaciones de El Salvador*, Septiembre, 14, 1953, 30-31.
[158] *Labor Law and Practice*, 60.

coverage continued in the following decades and eventually reached all parts of the country by the end of the 1970s.[159]

In terms of improvements to the health system, one of the most lasting accomplishments of the first decade of reforms was the creation of modern clinics and hospitals dedicated to serving workers who were members of the Social Security system. The first two clinics were inaugurated in 1954, one in the capital city San Salvador and another in the neighboring town of Santa Tecla. Both offered emergency care, medical and dental consultations, lab and x-rays services, and a pharmacy. During its initial years, the Social Security system also had arrangements with other hospitals to admit patients who needed hospitalization.[160] In the following decade, however, the system grew to have its own four-hundred bed hospital as well as a variety of modern specialty facilities that served different kinds of patients. The efficiency of the medical services offered by the Social Security system turned into an object of pride for the affiliated members. Being part of the rank and file in the emerging industrial sector of those years meant, among other things, that workers had access to the best medical care in the nation.

Although the medical care established by the Social Security system is one of the most notable accomplishments in the area of health reforms initiated in the 1950s, the government also carried other significant projects.[161] Among them was the creation of the National School of Nursing, of the School of Sanitary Training, of the Rural Wellness Program, the construction of the Maternity Hospital, of the National Tuberculosis Sanatorium, and of a total of seventy-four basic health centers in rural areas around the

[159] Instituto Salvadoreño Del Seguro Social, "Cinco Décadas de Seguridad Social," https://www.iss.gob.sv
[160] "Primer Instituto de Previsión y Seguridad Social en El Salvador," 30-31.
[161] Although the prestige that the medical services offered by the Social Security once had has been lost, the system still serves 1.03 million members. Source: ISSS. Estadísticas, "Patronos y trabajadores reportados y cotizados al ISSS a septiembre 2019," https://www.iss.gob.sv

country.[162] There were also sanitation projects to eradicate malaria in the coastal areas and vaccination campaigns against smallpox, tetanus, whooping cough, diphtheria, and tuberculosis.[163]

The campaign to eradicate malaria was of particular importance. In the early years of the decade the coastal areas were still infested with malaria, and two-thirds of the entire national territory had cases of the disease.[164] Prior to these eradication efforts, the most common remedies to which the rural working classes had access were infusions made with leaves or bark from plants that had similar properties to Chinchona, the main plant from which quinine was extracted.[165] Although quinine in tincture form was available in pharmacies since the early 1930s, most people did not have access to it, and the mosquito breeding grounds along the coasts remained untreated.

Between 1948 and 1951, the Salvadoran government, with the help of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), developed a plan to eradicate malaria in the coastal areas. The plan began in 1951 and was composed of four main steps: spraying DDT in zones deemed as mosquito breeding grounds, constructing basic sanitation engineering projects (such as storm water drainage), distributing free Chloroquine tablets and other medications, and educating the public about safe hygiene and sanitation practices.[166] Public health education was

[162] Anna M. Fisher, "Nursing in El Salvador," 682-684, "El Programa de Bienestar Rural. Realidad Beneficiosa Para el Campesino," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1955, 44, "Inaugurado el Hospital de Maternidad," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Diciembre 14, 1953, and "Historia," Ministerio de Salud de El Salvador, https://www.salud.gob.sv/historia.
[163] "Los progresos sanitarios en El Salvador," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Enero 14, 1953, 24, and Primer Instituto de Previsión y Seguridad Social en El Salvador," 30-31.
[164] Ibid.
[165] The most common shrubs used were "Chichipince" or "Copalchi." Since 1820 when it was first isolated from the Chinchona tree, Quinine, in its various forms, has been the main treatment for malaria.
[166] Chloriquine was introduced into clinical practice in the world in 1947. In El Salvador it was distributed under the trade name "Aralen," and was combined with the anti-parasitic Pyrimethamine.

possible thanks to an increase of qualified health staff trained at the Sanitation Training School and at the National Nursing School. Under the direction of the Rural Wellness Program, these personnel established basic health centers in rural areas that had never received medical services before. The Rural Wellness Program, whose main goals were to bring preventive and palliative medicine to the rural population, was started in 1950 at the behest of President Osorio. It was managed by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance and received guidance from the WHO. From 1953 the program relied heavily on the students and graduates from the recently opened National Nursing school to take its services to small towns and settlements throughout the country.[167]

Although complete eradication of malaria did not happen in the 1950s, significant advances were accomplished. According to a report of the WHO, for example, by 1954 the anti-malaria campaign had provided services and protection to around 800,000 people, which represented about sixty percent of the threatened population.[168] The rate of mortality due to the illness, according to the same report, had decreased from 91 to 44 per every 100,000 people. The campaign intensified in the following decades and added other methods of control such as aerial spraying of larvicides and the periodical in-home fumigation with insecticides, which helped to further reduce incidence.[169]

The drive to eradicate malaria brought significant changes to the entire country. From a humanitarian perspective, it helped establish basic health care centers in rural areas where people had never been seen by a qualified health care professional. From an

[167] "El Programa de Bienestar Rural," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* September 14, 1955, 45.
[168] Juan Allwood Paredes, "Informe de El Salvador Sobre los Progresos Realizados en su Programa de Erradicación del Paludismo," *Informes Sobre los Programas de Erradicación de la Malaria en las Americas* (Washington, DC: Organización Sanitaria Panamericana, 1955):1.
[169] John Mason and Jesse Hobbs, "Estudios experimentales sobre la malaria en una zona de elevada incidencia del litoral de El Salvador," *Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana* 84:1 (1978):52, https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/16131.

economic perspective, the reduction of the disease helped to attract much needed laborers to the coast to work in the cotton plantations, in the construction of highways, ports, and other emerging sectors. Although in the early years most of the new workers were temporary migrants who were there only for the duration of the harvest season or for a specific project, health improvements—specifically the reduction of malaria—and the general economic development of the areas encouraged many people to make the coast their new home. The opening of the Salvadoran coast, then, was possible to a great extent because of health reforms that began in the 1950s.

Another major social reform project was the improvement of housing conditions in both the urban and rural sectors. Given the low purchasing power of the Salvadoran working classes, the only housing to which they had access was rented and often substandard. In the urban centers, for example, workers and their families typically lived in units called *mesones*, which were housing structures with several rooms that surrounded a central patio. Each family rented one room and shared the toilet, the shower, and tub for laundry with the other tenant families. The single rooms only had one door and one window, and functioned as bedroom, living room, dining room and kitchen. Water and electricity were rationed and available only at night. Even with such conditions, the *mesones* prevailed as the better option for urban workers, as the other alternative was the shanty towns in the city's outskirts where living conditions were worse. Just in the city of San Salvador, for example, 67.5 percent of the families lived in *mesones* in 1953.[170] In the rest of the urban centers they accounted for a total of 41

[170] Wilson Garces Pachano, *Estudio Sobre la Vivienda en El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador* (New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954), 16.

percent of the housing structures.[171] Home ownership was not a possibility for the working classes in those years not only because of the income factor, but also due to a restrictive mortgage system that was accessible only to people with substantial incomes. A typical mortgage required a forty to fifty percent down payment, had high interests, and terms that could not exceed ten years.[172]

Although home ownership was more common in the rural areas among small farmers and small-town residents, it was not the norm. Most peasant families lived scattered among the coffee plantations or other agricultural lands and did so through the *colonato* system, a custom in which the landowner allowed a certain number of peasants to remain on the land, build a house, and use a small plot for subsistence farming in exchange for their labor on the plantation and a share of their harvest. The houses in which these families lived were usually single rooms made of wattle and daub which lacked the basic safety and sanitary conditions necessary for healthy living. The conditions were worse for migrant workers who showed up to the plantations only during the harvest season, as they lived in improvised huts that left them exposed to cold temperatures, insects, wild animals, and accidents such as fires or washouts during a heavy rain.

With these realities in mind, the government began the housing reform projects with the creation of the Urban Housing Institute and the Rural Colonization Institute, both in 1950. The goals announced by these two entities were "to combat the *mesón,*" and "to combat the hut," respectively. Following directives from the foreign technical experts who studied the housing problems and needs of the country, both institutes

[171] Wilson Garces Pachano, *Estudio Sobre la Vivienda,* 13.
[172] Gary David Schill, "A Place to Live: Middle Class Housing in San Salvador, El Salvador" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1973), 56.

carried out projects that accomplished significant changes for many families and set the stage for future reforms.

The Urban Housing Institute, for example, supervised the planning, construction, and financing of affordable homes for urban families with low and medium incomes.[173] In its first decade of operations, the Institute finished the construction of six thousand residences just in the city of San Salvador.[174] Since one of the factors that had been denying the working classes the possibility of home ownership was a restrictive mortgage system, the government offered these new units through financing plans that required no down payment and no interests, that had terms of twenty years, and monthly payments that ranged from 5.80 to 24 dollars per month.[175] All of the housing units were equipped with water, sewage and electricity. The neighborhoods also had sidewalks, paved streets, parks, commercial centers, movie theatres, schools, and "community houses," for socialization activities.[176] The housing projects continued during the following two decades during which the Urban Housing Institute focused exclusively in the needs of the low-income sectors, developing even more accessible financing plans, mutual help construction programs, and building multi-story public apartments for those whose only possibility was rental.

The Rural Colonization Institute had a slightly different agenda. It sought to make farming land available to peasants at nominal fees, to construct housing projects similar to those in the urban centers, to provide loans for the purchase of equipment, and to

[173] Gary David Schill, "A Place to Live," 62.
[174] Ibid, 63.
[175] "Construcción de Casas Para Familias Pobres," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* September 14, 1950, 8-9, and "El Salvador Sells Workers Houses—No Money Down," *Los Angeles Times,* October 15, 1951.
[176] "El Insitituto de Vivienda Urbana Continua Facilitando Hogares Comfortables a Obreros," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Abril 14, 1955, 30-31.

educate peasant families in basic hygiene habits, modern cultivation methods, carpentry, construction, and homemaking.

While the accomplishments of the Rural Colonization Institute were fewer than those in urban areas, they were nevertheless significant taking into account that, to make the intended changes in the country side, the new government could run into disagreements with the country's powerful coffee landlords who distrusted any efforts of land redistribution.

To achieve the intended goals without generating friction, the government decided to use land that already belonged to the State and to purchase farms that were for sale. These lands were turned into communities in which the inhabitants had their plot of land for agricultural purposes and a housing area similar to the low-cost housing projects of the urban centers. The communities also had henhouses, pigpens, a barn-like building to store crops, a water well operated with an electric pump, a community house, a school, and a sports area.[177] Being that the purchase power of the rural classes was less than those of their urban counterparts, the farming plots and houses were financed according to the beneficiary's ability to generate income. The price of each property, for example, was $800 US, which was forty-two percent less than the price of the same house in an urban center, and loans were granted for twenty years.[178]

In its first six years of operations, the Rural Colonization Institute granted 5,200 acres of farming land through lease-to-own agreements and created the communities Sitio

[177] "Las Comunidades Rurales. Ayer un Ensayo Hoy Una Realidad," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Diciembre 14, 1954, 13-14.
[178] "Colonias Rurales Para el Obrero Campesino," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Agosto 14, 1952, 6-7. The prices of the houses in Salvadoran currency were 3,500 Colones in the urban centers and 2,000 Colones in the rural areas. The exchange rate at the time was 2.50 Colones per one dollar (according to the 1951 U.S. Foreign Commerce Year Book).

del Niño, Joya de Cerén, Hacienda California, San Isidro, San Juan, and Metalío, each community with 250 housing units.[179] By the mid-1960s the Institute (at the time under the direction of ex-President Oscar Osorio) had been able to establish thirty one rural communities, which had made available a total of 123,640 acres of land to sixty thousand people.[180] In addition to providing basic housing and farming land, the Institute also guaranteed loans from default, constructed paved roads for the communities, provided technical advice for better agricultural production, and gave different kinds of social assistance/training to the inhabitants of the communities. This last part was provided with the support of the American Friends Service Committee—a movement of the Quakers religious group that worked for peace and social justice goals around the world—and of Mennonite volunteers who collaborated with the UN missions in lieu of military conscription in the U.S.[181] Just in the decade of the 1950s there were about 100 of these volunteers who devoted from eight months to two years to work in the countryside sharing with the Salvadoran peasants their skills in agriculture, furniture making, construction, animal husbandry, bread baking, and other such abilities.[182]

The impact of the work of the Rural Colonization Institute on the rural working classes goes beyond the granting of land, housing, and other material resources to a limited number of people. The communities that were founded by this agency were also able to organize to work for common gain, despite the de-facto rule that did not allow agricultural workers to form unions. Under the guidance of the government, the

[179] "Reparto de Tierras," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Junio 14, 1951, 1, "La Revolución Cumple con el Campesinado," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Julio 14, 1956, 16-19. In El Salvador land is measured in *manzanas.* Each manzana equals 2.5 acres. The original number of farming land granted was 2,102 *manzanas.*
[180] Clarence W. Minkel, "Programs of Agricultural Colonization and Settlement in Central America," *Revista Geográfica,* 66 (1967):29, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40982775.
[181] Clarence W. Minkel, "Programs of Agricultural Colonization," 30.
[182] Ibid.

communities were organized in cooperatives that were called "Fincas de Beneficio Proporcional" (Proportional-Profit Farms). With this system, the members of the communities, in addition to working in their own subsistence plot, joined efforts in larger communal cash crops fields. After the harvest, the net profits were distributed equally among the members. The system certainly helped its participants to pay for their mortgage, to buy more food and to cover other needs. It also helped, however, to introduce many people to the power of organized action. The welfare they achieved, however limited, was observed by other peasants who lived around and whose life circumstances were more constricted by the inability to unionize imposed by the land owners. The communities served, thus, as basic precedents for new and independent peasant cooperatives that gradually appeared in the following decades, demanding their right to organize, their share of land, and improvements in their standards of living.[183]

Another major housing related measure that had significant impact in the life of the working classes was the Tenancy Law enacted in February 1958. This law decree aimed at protecting the renter from immoderate/unjust rent hikes that had emerged from the increase in housing demand in the years after 1950. The owners of the *mesones* particularly, were charging excessive amounts. The Tenancy Law fixed the monthly rent in the *mesones* to the last rent amount paid in the year 1957, ordered landlords to provide tenants with a written contract and monthly receipts, established guidelines for eviction, and created a Tenancy Court to solve housing-related conflicts.[184]

The work of the Urban Housing Institute, the Rural Colonization Institute, and the Tenancy Law, brought reforms that changed the lives of a great number of working-class

[183] See ""Las Comunidades Rurales. Ayer un Ensayo Hoy Una Realidad," 13-14.
[184] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 2591, "Ley de Inquilinato," *Diario Oficial,* 178, no. 35 (Febrero 20, 1958):1450, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1958/02-febrero/febrero-1958_Parte18.pdf.

Salvadorans during the decade of the 1950s and established a basis for similar reforms in the following decades. The reforms brought about through the housing projects were significant for at least three reasons. First, they radically improved basic living conditions of the beneficiaries by moving them from unsanitary single rooms to healthier and more dignified homes. Second, they helped convert the property-less working classes into home owners (an arguably revolutionary change, considering that El Salvador, in those years, was often referred to as a country of "men without land" due to the monopoly in land tenure exercised by the coffee elites). Lastly, property ownership, along with other social improvements taking place at the time, elevated the standard of living for many people in and led to the growth of a middle class in the following decades.

The last major social reform that took place in the 1950s was in education. This reform was a particularly challenging task because of long standing traditions and conventions that regarded mass education as inconvenient for social order. Both the landed elites and the military governments that ruled in the style of Maximiliano Hernández Martínez until 1948 believed that the lower classes of society should remain in their place because, if educated, they would become conscious of the misdeeds committed by the government and would rebel. The government's support towards educational goals, then, had been mostly symbolic and focused on basic primary education. Secondary and higher education were perceived as dangerous and those who demanded it ran the risk of being labeled as communists.

Nevertheless, from its early days and later through the Constitution of 1950, the new government made it known that its position regarding education differed radically from that of previous governments. Chapter III of the Constitution declared, for example,

that literacy was a matter of social interest, that all inhabitants of the nation had the right to receive free basic education, and that it was the duty of the State to create the necessary institutions towards the realization of those ideals. In terms of higher education, the Constitution also broke with the tradition of limited access practiced by previous governments by returning autonomy to the National University and declaring that it was the duty of the State to contribute to the University's maintenance with reliable and increasing financial assistance.

The pro-education stance of the new government brought substantive reforms to all three levels of education. The reforms were based on studies done by a UNESCO Educational Mission. One of the first measures was a literacy campaign. This effort began in October 1949, with the creation of the Literacy and Adult Education Department, which was given the task of reducing the high illiteracy rate (87.3%) that the country had at the time. The institution organized two groups to carry out the task: the Cultural Rural Brigades and the Motorized Brigades, both formed with personnel paid by the Ministry of Culture and by various volunteers from international organizations.[185] In the first three years of the campaign the Brigades had established 401 literacy centers throughout the country and had educated 13,297 people.[186]

Basic and secondary education received important improvements beginning in 1952, when Dr. Reynaldo Galindo Pohl ended his term as head of the National Assembly and was appointed Minister of Culture and Popular Education. One of his first

[185] "El Consejo de Gobierno y el Magisterio Nacional," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Agosto 14, 1950, 30, and "La Obra Cultural de la República," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Octubre 14, 1952,7-8.
[186] "Número de Centros Alfabetizadores Clasificados por Departamento y Sexo. Areas Urbana y Rural. Año 1953," and "Matrícula y Valorización Final Obtenida en Centros Alfabetizadores por Departamento y Sexo. Areas Urbana y Rural. Año 1935," *Boletín Estadístico. Organo de la Dirección General de Estadística y Censos,* no. 16 (1954): 446-451.

announcements as Minister was a project for the construction of government-owned school buildings to begin substituting the rented and often dilapidated facilities where working class children had mostly been receiving their education. The project had a $4 million US budget—thus far the largest education budget in the history of the country.[187] Although the announcement was received with skepticism by the conservative sectors, by 1955 there were seventy new and modern basic education school buildings throughout the nation, and the number of students had reached 157,000 which meant an increase of 131 percent from ten years earlier, when the country was still ruled by the conservative governments established by Hernández Martínez.[188] This first experience in school building construction served as a model for further projects which took place in the following years and that, as I discuss in later chapters, happened in larger numbers and at faster rates.

In addition to the need of a new educational infrastructure, one of the main challenges that the education campaigns faced was the lack of qualified educators. To solve the need in the primary and secondary school levels the government sponsored the expansion of normal schools. At the beginning of the decade El Salvador had only three normal schools that prepared teachers of both primary and secondary education.[189] In 1950 the Ministry of Education established the first Rural Normal School, which was dedicated exclusively to the preparation of primary school teachers who would work in

---

[187] "El Salvador Plans New Schools," *New York Times,* November 18, 1953. In Salvadoran currency the budget was ten million Colones. Exchange rate was ₡2.50 x $1.00 according to the United Nations Statistical Yearbook of 1960.

[188] Average attendance in the moths of October of 1944 and 1954 were 72,262 and 157,010, respectively. See "Asistencia Media en Febrero, Julio, y Octubre, 1943-1951," *Boletín Estadístico. Organo de la Dirección General de Estadística y Censos,* no. 5 (1952): 48, and "Asistencia Media Registrada Durante Períodos Selectos en los Planteles de Enseñanza Primaria de El Salvador. Año 1954," *Boletín Estadístico. Organo de la Dirección General de Estadística y Censos,* no. 23 (1955): 408.

[189] "Formación y Capacitación del Profesorado," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Noviembre 14, 1953, 39-40 (1953):10.

rural areas.[190] Dr. Galindo Pohl at the Ministry of Education established the Superior Normal School, dedicated exclusively to prepare secondary teachers; he also expanded the number of normal schools for basic education teachers throughout the country. By 1956 the number of normal schools had increased to 12, and by 1963 it had jumped to 54 schools, which had a total of 7,231 students being prepared to teach both basic and secondary education.[191] In the early years of educational reforms the government provided scholarships that included food and board for students in need. However, as more schools were established throughout the country, the type of economic assistance was changed to tuition for those who were preparing to teach in the basic levels.

Regarding higher education area, the reforms that took place in the early years of the 1950s were equally substantial. Before 1949 the National University was formed by a loosely connected association of six independent Colleges.[192] There were no general education courses and no electives. There was no central administration, records, treasury, or library. There were no full-time professors (at the time, college teaching was a secondary job for professionals who worked full time in their own fields). There was no central campus. All Colleges were dispersed throughout the city in private houses and sometimes shared facilities with private secondary schools. Starting in 1931, when Hernández Martínez became president, the University fell under strict and arbitrary control by the government. In 1933, for example, the president demonstrated his contempt towards higher education by lowering the University's budget by twenty five

[190] "El Consejo de Gobierno y el Magisterio Nacional," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Agosto 14, 1950, 9.
[191] Javier Ruíz Paniagua, *La Educación Normal en El Salvador*, (Guatemala, GT: Instituto de Investigaciones y Mejoramiento Educativo. Universidad de San Carlos & Michigan State University, 1965), 4.
[192] The Colleges were: Law and Social Science, Medicine, Chemistry and Pharmacy, Dentistry, Engineering, and Economics.

percent (although the initial intention was to reduce it by fifty percent).[193] In the years that followed he intervened by establishing disciplinary actions to professors or entire departments and even participated as a presenter in academic conferences.[194]

Things changed in 1950 when, through Article 205 of the new Constitution, the University regained its autonomy, and with the support of the Ministry of Public Works, the private sector, and various international assistance organizations, began its own set of reforms. These reforms included: diversification of careers in accord with the needs, possibilities and resources of the country, opening the doors to all sectors of the student population, acquisition of modern laboratories for the sciences, organizing faculty devoted exclusively and full-time to university teaching, establishing a central library, offering assistance to low income students, the creation of student housing, and the construction of its own —and first—formal campus.[195]

The construction of the University's campus began in 1950 with buildings for the Tropical Institute of Scientific Investigation, Law and Social Sciences, and Chemistry. Construction continued in the following years and by 1965 completion was in its final stages. The new campus, which became popularly known as "Ciudad Universitaria" came to have all the features of a modern higher education institution that had been set as goals in the plans for reform at the beginning of the 1950s.

An innovative feature of the new campus was the Tropical Institute of Scientific Investigation, which was an interdisciplinary center intended to establish the University

[193] Carlos E. Martínez, "Historia de la Facultad de Ingeniería y Arquitectura de la Universidad de El Salvador durante los años 1935-1936, *La Universidad. Organo Científico-Sociocultural de la Universidad de El Salvador. Nueva Epoca,* 5 (2009):131-132.
[194] David Luna, "Análisis de Una Dictadura Facista Latinoamericana. Maximiliano H. Martínez 1931-1944," *La Universidad. Organo Científico-Sociocultural de la Universidad de El Salvador,* 5 (1969):73.
[195] Among the international aid organizations that collaborated were the Kellogg, Rockefeller, and Ford foundations. Source: Carlos E. Martínez, "Historia de la Facultad de Ingeniería," 148.

as a true research institution. As there were no similar centers, in its initial years the Institute invited foreign scientists to conduct their studies and share their knowledge with Salvadoran students. From 1950 to 1954 the Institute housed a total of 40 visiting researchers from Germany, the United States, Netherlands, and France. They conducted studies in Botany, Zoology, Aquatic Biology, Geology, Geography, Meteorology, Anthropology, Archaeology, Hydrology, Chemistry, and Tropical Medicine.[196] The studies conducted by these investigators were published in the Institute's bi-monthly journal *Comunicaciones* and also in book format. Some of the books are *Los Volcanes Activos de Guatemala y El Salvador* by Helmut Meyer-Abich, *Manual de las Aves de El Salvador* by A.L. Rand and Melvin. A. Taylor, *Farinosa of El Salvador* by Otto Rohweder, and *Amphibia and Reptiles of El Salvador* by R. Mertens.[197]

The new institution also served directly in the reform projects that were taking place at the time. Under the guidance of German geologist Helmut Meyer-Abich, the researchers of the Institute conducted some of the initial studies for the construction of the dam for the Fifth of November Hydroelectric Plant and for the construction of the geothermal plant of Ahuachapán. The Institute also established an Oceanography Station at the new Acajutla port, the National Geological Service, and the Department of Seismology.[198]

In addition to the new physical infrastructure and research innovations, the University also established an important program for student welfare. The program was

[196] Aristides Palacious, "El Salvador's Tropical Institute," *Science. New Series* 127, no 3301 (1958):746, https://www.jstor.org/stable/1755096.
[197] Aristides Palacious, "El Salvador's Tropical Institute," 746, and Lauer Wilhelm, "Instituto Tropical de Investigaciones Científicas de El Salvador," *Comunicaciones* 3, no. 1 (1954):46.
[198] "Helmut Meyer-Abich. Geólogo Pionero en El Salvador," Gobierno de El Salvador. Ministerio del Medio Ambiente, accessed December 10, 2020, http://www.marn.gob.sv/helmut-meyer-abich.

composed of: (1) a system of scholarships that paid all expenses (tuition, books, lodging, clothes and other costs) to one-tenth of all students enrolled; (2) a program of free medical and dental services for students; (3) a student store where all necessary supplies could be obtained at cost; (4) a student sports and recreation program; and (5) a tuition system based on the ability to pay, with fees that ranged from a minimum of four to a maximum of forty dollars per month.[199] After these reforms, annual enrollment increased from 1,199 students in 1950 to 2, 241 at the end of the decade, and to 5,062 by 1966.[200]

The new conditions caused enormous impact. They fulfilled the goal of opening the doors to all sectors of the student age population and, as a result, the demographics of the student body soon changed. For the first time in the history of the country, the University had students who did not wear suits nor had refined manners, but who came from the lower sectors of society and had obtained a place in the institution solely through academic merits. At the time, this was a shameful situation for the conservative sectors, who circulated the diminishing phrase "el mesón llegó a la Universidad" (the *mesón* arrived to the University) to refer to the unprecedented—and unacceptable for them—attendance of students who came from the dreaded housing units called *mesones*.[201]

Higher education was also supported by scholarships to study abroad provided by the government and by various international organizations. In the initial years of the decade the scholarship programs were offered and managed directly through the

---

[199] Reese Danley Kilgo, "The Development of Education in El Salvador" (PhD diss., The University of Texas Austin, 1966), 91.
[200] "Matrícula total de la Universidad de El Salvador por Facultad y Sexo. 1950-1951," *Anuario Estadístico. Dirección Nacional de Estadística y Censos*, 1 (1950-1951): 378, "Profesores, Alumnos y Doctorados en la Universidad Nacional, por Sexo y Facultad: 1955-1960," *Anuario Estadístico. Dirección Nacional de Estadística y Censos*,1 (1960): 102, and Reese Danley Kilgo, "The Development of Education," 99.
[201] Carlos E. Martínez, "Historia de la Facultad de Ingeniería," 152.

executive office. In 1951 alone, the government granted forty-one scholarships for students to specialize in various fields and in different parts of the world.[202] As the number of normal schools began to increase, international organizations like AID, OEA, UNICEF, and UNESCO also provided scholarships for the specialization of teachers abroad. Scholarships to study specifically in the United States were offered through the Point Four Program and were given as a joint effort between the governments of the two countries.[203]

Other efforts to improve the area of education included the creation of the National School of Agriculture, the School of Nursing, the School of Social Work, the National School of Public Administration, and the Institute of Technical Education. This last institution was created with the specific goal of increasing the pool of skilled labor for the planned industrial expansion, and the students were laborers who, in a term of three years, specialized in general mechanics, forging and casting, electricity, welding, plumbing, and other such occupations.[204]

New cultural institutions were also created under an umbrella organization called the General Board of Fine Arts, which created and oversaw the National Music Conservatory, The School of Modern and Classical Dance, the School of Performing Arts, the School of Plastic Arts, and the Department of Literature. These cultural areas, which had previously existed only for the privileged few, were opened to the working classes. Courses at the National Music Conservatory, for example, were tuition free and

[202] Some of the fields of study were Engineering, Library Science, Counseling, Education for the Blind, Gastroenterology, and Chemistry. The places where the sponsored studies were taking place were Mexico, Chile, Argentina, Spain, and France. See "Becados en el Exterior," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1951, 24-25.
[203] "Firmase Acuerdo Sobre Concesión de Becas Entre los Gobiernos de Estados Unidos y El Salvador," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Julio 14, 1951, 19-21.
[204] "Obra de Grandes Alcances Para el Porvenir es el Instituto de Educación Técnica," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1956, 41-43.

were offered for both children and adults. Just in 1953 the National Music Conservatory had nearly 600 students taking courses in voice, piano, string, brass and reed instruments.[205] The School of Dance had similar enrollments and was of particular importance because, in addition to teaching classical and modern dances, it also promoted Salvadoran folk dances—a practice that had waned since 1932 as a result of the indigenous massacre perpetrated by the regime of Hernández Martínez.

The last two education-related projects were the creation of a mobile public library and of the National Culture Contest, both created by the Ministry of Culture. The mobile public library program had the goal of fostering the habit of reading among the low income sectors. It was initiated in 1951, and by 1953 it had established 100 posts around the country.[206] Although through a slow process, the program was a precedent to the creation (in the 1970s) of a network of permanent local libraries called the National Network of Cultural Houses, which became important centers for popular education. The National Culture Contest was created in 1954 and was open to artists from all the Central American countries, including Panama. The Contest, which lasted until 1982, had prizes for literature, plastic arts, sciences, and music. The prizes, which at the time were very attractive ($3,200 US), encouraged artistic productions and the discovery of new talents among the entire Central American population.[207] It was during this decade that the country saw the rise of many of the quintessential Salvadoran narrators, playwrights, and

[205] Reese Danley Kilgo, "The Development of Education," 99, and "El Conservatorio Nacional de Música al Servicio del Pueblo," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1953, 20-23.
[206] "Servicio Social, Bibliotecas, y Bellas Artes," *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Noviembre 1953, 10. The "mobile library" program was a system of book-lending for rural communities. A box of books was delivered by vehicle to a designated place or person in a town or village. The vehicle would come back periodically to deliver another box of books (some requested by the people in the community) and would take the old box to another town. The system was a relatively un-expensive way of fomenting the habit of reading without having to create physical infrastructure.
[207] About $34,230.31 US today.

poets like Salarrué, Napoleón Rodríguez Ruiz, Hugo Lindo, Claudia Lars, Walter Béneke, Oswaldo Escobar Velado, Ricardo Trigueros de León, and Italo López Vallecillos, among others. The contest influenced the establishment of another exclusively Salvadoran literature contest (in the 1960s) named the Salvadoran Floral Games, which further promoted literature appreciation and supported working class authors by publishing their work.

Conclusion

The socio-economic reforms that began to take place in El Salvador on December 14, 1948 and that continued throughout the decade of the 1950s signified a radical departure from the ways previous administrations had conceived and managed the nation. They reconfigured the political, economic, and social realms, and benefited all sectors of Salvadoran society. The benefits, however, were of unprecedented nature for the working-class sectors as, for the first time in the history of the nation, the State-led reform projects intended to bring improvement to their lives, and they were taken into account in the socio-political and economic processes. The Constitution of 1950 reconfigured the role of the State from keeper of social order to provider of social justice, and granted the working classes rights previously denied such as the right to vote, form labor unions, and attend school. The infrastructure projects—hydroelectric stations, highways and ports—helped with the government's efforts to diversify the economy and began to bring electricity to the working classes, who had relied on candles and kerosene for generations.

The social reforms were based on the principles of social rights set forth in the new Constitution and brought fundamental changes to Salvadoran society. Labor rights that were common in other parts of the world but unheard of in El Salvador, for example, began to change the employer-worker relationships. Workers obtained the right to establish a legal complaint against their employers, the eight-hour workday, overtime pay, paid vacations, paid maternity leave, medical and social security benefits, severance pay, and the right to strike, among others. The health reforms also had a great impact on the working classes. The government established a system of health services that benefited commercial, industrial, and State employees with the most modern and efficient health centers of the nation. It also built many health clinics in previously forgotten rural areas and initiated an anti-malaria campaign, which greatly reduced mortality due to that disease and helped to populate the relatively isolated coastal areas.

The housing reforms helped many people become property owners for the first time with the creation of financing programs accessible and commensurate with their income. The urban working classes were able to gradually move from rented and overcrowded units into modern homes. Rural workers also began to have access to better housing as the government acquired land to create rural communities with modern housing units offered through accessible contracts.

In terms of education reforms, the new government adopted a posture radically different from previous governments, deeming education a matter of social interest. It started an adult literacy campaign, constructed modern basic and secondary school buildings, expanded the number of teacher training schools, and supported popular cultural activities such as music, dance, the plastic arts and literature. The government

also supported the National University by returning its autonomy (repealed by previous governments) and by helping with the construction of its first formal campus. The University conducted its own reforms and established scholarship and student welfare programs that allowed the working classes to receive higher education for the first time.

All these reforms projects were planned and implemented with the help of international programs and organizations such as the United Nations Technical Assistance Programme, the United States Point Four Program, UNESCO, UNICEF, AID, and the Rockefeller and Ford foundations. The young Salvadoran leaders however, had the vision to bring the country into the modern world and the sense to request the assistance of professional and experienced international organizations to help with the quest.

Although the technical assistance programs and other US based aid agencies had the political goals of steering developing nations away from the socialist bloc and persuading them to embrace capitalism, they still provided tangible knowledge that positioned countries like El Salvador in an actual path towards development. Alignment to the US sphere of political influence was not a condition to which the country had to submit to, as anti-communism was a well-known and traditional characteristic of the Salvadoran military in charge of the government.

While city dwellers seemed to have attained more benefits from the reforms than their counterparts in the countryside, rural and landless peasants also experienced unprecedented changes that began to improve their lives. They began to be taken into account in the political processes by the new leaders, they had access to basic health care in the clinics established by the Rural Wellness Program all around the country (and in

the previously isolated coast), to education through the literacy campaigns and in the many schools established after the expansion of the teacher training programs, they received training on modern cultivation methods and, although in limited numbers, many got access to farming land at nominal fees and/or a housing unit granted by the Rural Colonization Insitute.

Although the reforms did not reach every Salvadoran, they introduced changes that were significant for thousands of people at the time and that were fundamental for the future socio-political and economic activities of the country. The 1950s was the decade of "first times" for the working classes, as for the first time in the history of the country they were able to vote, to read, to receive medical care, and to own their own place. At any rate, the decade of the 1950s, was the first time there was a deliberate effort to raise the national standard of living.

Chapter Three: The Buenas Epocas, the 1960s

Profile

In the span of the decade of the 1950s, the population of El Salvador increased from 1,800,000 to 2,510,984 people [Appendix 2].[208] Population density was now 126 per square kilometer and annual population growth remained at around 3%. Approximately sixty-one percent of the population lived in rural areas and thirty-eight percent in urban centers—a fourteen percent decrease and thirteen percent increase, respectively, when compared to the figures from 1950. About sixty percent of the 807,092 people that formed the economically active population were dedicated to agricultural activities, thirteen percent to the services sector, thirteen percent to the manufacturing sector, six percent to commerce, four percent to construction, and another four percent to other various sectors such as transportation, communications, etc. [Appendix 5].[209] The country's economy, once dependent solely on the cultivation of coffee, had taken initial steps towards diversification and was now also based on the cultivation of cotton, sugar cane and on an emergent light industry sector. GDP per capita was about 192 dollars.[210] Literacy rate for the population ten years of age and

[208] "Población de El Salvador por Areas Urbana y Rural, Sexo y Departamento," *Tercer Censo Nacional de Población 1961* (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1965): 1.
[209] "Características Económicas de la Población," *Tercer Censo Nacional de Población 1961,* (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1965): XXIX.
[210] James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus. A Political History of Central America* (New York, NY: Verso, 1988), 175.

above was fifty-one percent. Average life expectancy experienced a remarkable increase of ten years since 1950, as it jumped from 40 to 50 years of age in 1960.[211]

In the previous decade the country experienced several political, economic, and social reconfiguration programs led by the government and supported by technical aid programs offered by the United Nations and the U.S. As a result of those programs, the country was transformed in significant ways. Participation in the political processes was now a universal right. The working classes had begun to see the possibility of substantial changes in their standards of life as the government had provided many people with access to better housing, health care, and education. The infrastructure of the country had changed significantly with the construction of roads, bridges, hydroelectric dams, new housing zones, industrial parks, schools, hospitals, tourism facilities, and other public works.

Those changes were noticed by the international media, which began to portray the country in positive terms. Although initially painted as an exotic "land of volcanoes," the image of El Salvador rapidly shifted to that of a nation embarked on a quest towards progress. In 1957, for example, *World Affairs* published an article that exemplified how the country was perceived during those years. The article has a title that would figure as odd in today's body of knowledge about the small nation: "Economic Progress in El Salvador." It was written by W.J. Feuerlein, a professor of Economics at the University of Florida who had been one of the technical experts sent by the United Technical

[211] "Alfabetismo, Asistencia Escolar y Nivel Educacional," *Tercer Censo Nacional de Población 1961*, (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1965): XXIII, and "World Development Indicators. El Salvador. Life Expectancy at Birth, 1960," World Bank. Databank, accessed March 7, 2020, https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators/preview/on. While the comparison on life expectancy is simple (there was an increase of ten years), the literacy rates can't be easily compared since the figure from 1950 (87.3 percent illiteracy) apparently takes into account the entire population whereas the number from 1960 (51 percent literacy) explicitly takes into account only the population of ten years of age and above.

Assistance Programme in the early years of the reforms. His observations, therefore, were those of someone familiar with the country and who could provide an informed and objective opinion of the impact of the reform processes. Some of his statements were:

> …El Salvador in recent years has emerged as one of the leading countries in the Central American Isthmus, undertaking a major economic and social development program…
>
> The political situation has been stable since 1948, when a peaceful revolution put in power a military government. One of its leaders, Col. Oscar Osorio, in 1950 was elected constitutional president. During his six-year term he proved himself to be a very capable and forward-looking leader and was responsible for initiating many development projects to improve the lot of the Salvadoran people. He completed his term in 1956 and turned over the reins of government to another constitutionally elected president.
>
> …El Salvador has a stable currency, a stable exchange rate, and has had a favorable balance of payments for many years.
>
> …intensive industrialization has become the goal of the government. Recognizing that the realization of such goal will need much planning, many changes in the economic environment, and much technical assistance, the government has used effectively and in considerable amount the help offered by the U.S. Government, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and many private agencies.

> …Although El Salvador has made effective use of much technical aid offered by foreign agencies, it must be stated emphatically that the country has really made the major effort.[212]

Such views, which contrast sharply with the views that would appear thirty-two years later in *Foreign Affairs*, set the tone for even higher praise in later publications. In the decade of the 1960s, for example, the international media would refer to El Salvador with phrases such as the "most progressive country," the "little giant on the go," "the bright spot of Central America," and "an exemplary economy," among others.

The State

Beginning in 1948 the role of the military in the political arena had changed significantly. The faction that took power that year was composed of younger men whose socio-economic background and aspirations were closer to the working classes. From unconditional defenders of the interest of the coffee elites, then, the military turned to head an unprecedented process of political, economic, and social reform. The first two leaders, Colonels Oscar Osorio and his successor José María Lemus, shared a similar desire to conduct reforms directed to achieve social justice. The particulars on how each of them conducted the reforms, however, allowed Osorio to see the completion of most of his projects during his tenure, but saw Lemus forced out of the presidential seat in 1960, two years before the end of his term.

Before being elected President, Lemus had been Osorio's Minister of the Interior, and had participated enthusiastically with the changes promoted by his administration.

[212] W.J. Feuerlein, "Economic Progress in El Salvador." *World Affairs* 120:3 (1957): 68-71.

His flawless service record and strong leadership earned him the nomination of his party to be the candidate for the 1956 elections, which he easily won in clean and free elections.[213] After assuming the presidential office he began to work on the continuation of the social reforms started by Osorio, particularly supporting the improvements in urban and rural housing, and in furthering the process towards the realization of the Central American Common Market. Although he had demonstrated to be a capable leader, his strict discipline (which earned him the nickname "shattered-glass broth") and his rigid anti-communist stance eventually came to have an impact in his performance. [214] Unlike Osorio, he didn't have the disposition to avoid friction with the economic elites, and his measures towards social justice (the Tenancy Law, among others) were perceived as too arbitrary and created antagonism with that sector. Although during his initial years as President the same measures gained the support of the working classes, that relationship also deteriorated after he reacted violently towards anti-government demonstrations led by university students who, under the influence of the 1959 Cuban Revolution, were leaning to the left in growing numbers: between August and September of 1960, when the demonstrations took place, he ordered the police to raid the University, and many students and professors—including the President and renowned author

[213] According to Mariano Castro Morán in *Función Política del Ejército Salvadoreño en el Presente Siglo* San Salvador, ES: UCA Editores, 1989), 210. Lemus was of humble origins. His biographers speak of a harsh childhood in the eastern department of La Union, where he had to work as a newsboy (and other such jobs) to help support his family. When he became president a note in the *Washington Post* made a reference to that past in the very first paragraph: "A professional soldier who was too poor to buy his first uniform is president elect of El Salvador, Central America's smallest country." See "Col. José Lemus Elected President of El Salvador," *Washington Post*, March 6, 1956, and Francisco Javier Alonso de Avila, "José María Lemus, el Adalid de la Democracia Salvadoreña," *Cuadernos Hispanoamericanos*, 648 (2004): 73-86. He became respected and rose to prominence at the military academy due to his sense of discipline and leadership qualities. He was also called "the idealist" of the Military Youth, as his love for reading had led him to obtain considerable theoretical knowledge on politics, which he was able to articulate verbally among his peers and in several essays and a memoir.

[214] "Glass broth"—Caldo de vidrio, in its original Spanish.

Napoleón Rodríguez Ruíz—were arrested and mistreated.[215] By October 26, 1960, Lemus had become isolated and was deposed in a peaceful coup d'état that is nowadays remembered as "el madrugón de los compadres" (buddies' checkmate), as it was organized by officers of his own faction (the Military Youth), including ex-president and friend Oscar Osorio.[216]

From October 26, 1960, the country was governed by a Board of Government (October 26, 1960 to January 25, 1961) and by a Civil-Military Directory (January 25, 1961 to April 25, 1962) until elections were organized for April 1962. For these elections the military attempted to distance itself from the instability of the final days of the Lemus administration by re-configuring their party, the Revolutionary Party for Democratic Unification, PRUD, into the Partido de Conciliación Nacional, PCN (National Conciliation Party), which would remain the official party until 1979. The presidential leaders who would guide the country during the 1960s were Colonels Julio Adalberto Rivera Carballo and Fidel Sánchez Hernández. Both of these administrations continued the political and socio-economic reforms that had been initiated by the faction that took power in 1948.

Political Reforms

In the decade of the 1960s the government of El Salvador gave new impulse to the process of political opening that had started with universal suffrage and freedom of association introduced in the previous decade. Those basic rights gave the population a degree of agency that encouraged them to participate more in the political processes. The

[215] Mariano Castro Morán, *Función Política del Ejército*, 213.
[216] *Historia de El Salvador. Tomo II*, 185

increase in participation affected the decision-making process of the government and, eventually led the nation to reach key political milestones in the decade of the 1960s. Those milestones were the creation of a strong opposition political party with no military nor communist ties and the introduction of a system of proportional representation to the Legislative Assembly.

The creation of a strong and independent opposition in the political arena of El Salvador was the result of a process that began in 1950 with the right to form political parties granted in Article 23 of the new Constitution. From that year on Salvadorans embraced that freedom and by the time the next presidential election took place in 1956 there were, unprecedentedly, a total of seven political parties attempting to run.[217] Most of these new parties, however, were short lived and never formed a significant opposition for most of the decade. The first time that an opposition party won political seats of importance happened in the Legislative and Municipal Elections of 1958, when the Renovated Action Party, PAR, obtained the mayoralties of the capital city San Salvador and of the cities of Santa Ana, La Libertad, and Santa Tecla. The type of opposition presented by the PAR, nevertheless, was essentially nominal since, even though the party was supported by many university students and other sections of the civilian population, its founder and leader was Colonel José Asencio Menénez, and he did not offer much criticism nor questioned the work of his military colleagues.

The absence of an independent party that would offer the country an alternative to the political monopoly of the military became a regular topic of discussion amongst a

[217] These parties were the Constitutional Democratic Party, PDC, the Democratic Institutional Party, PID, the National Action Party, PAN, the Nationalist Democratic Party, PDN, the Authentic Constitutional Party PAC, the Renovated Action Party, PAR, and the Revolutionary Party for Democratic Unification, PRUD. See *El Salvador Election Factbook,* (Washington, DC: Operations and Policy Research Inc., 1967), 28-31.

group of middle-class activists who, around 1958, began to gather in private homes to discuss national politics. The group eventually developed the idea of creating a political party based on Christian Democracy, a political ideology that was becoming important in some European and Latin American countries at the time. Christian Democracy originally emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century in Europe and was based on the 1891 papal encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum,* which advocated for the improvement in the condition of workers, distribution of wealth, and worker's rights to form unions, among other things. The ideology became stronger after WWII as Christian Democratic parties began to be founded in countries like Italy, Austria, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, and in some Latin American countries like Chile, Venezuela, Perú, Mexico, and Guatemala.[218]

After two years of meetings, the original small group had grown to over 100 persons and, on November 25, 1960, they gathered to officially found the Christian Democratic Party of El Salvador.[219] Its founding board was composed of eight civilian members, some of whom would, eventually, became important figures in Salvadoran politics. The most outstanding of them, however, was José Napoleón Duarte, an outspoken young civil engineer of working-class origins (he had lived his childhood years in a *mesón*) who, through academic merits, had obtained a series of scholarships that led him to graduate from the University of Notre Dame, Indiana. Under his leadership, the PDC became a mass party and one of the most influential in the country's politics. It was the first party that had no affiliation to either a military faction or a

[218] Kalyvas N. Stathis, *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe* (New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 167-220, and Scott Mainwaring and Timothy R. Scully, eds., *Christian Democracy in Latin America. Electoral Competition and Regime Conflicts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), 22.
[219] Stephen Webre, *José Napoleón Duarte and the Christian Democratic Party in Salvadoran Politics 1960-1972* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 33.

communist organization and enough political strength to offer significant opposition to the official party. The popularity that it gained in the decade of the 1960s steered the country's politics into a two-party system, served as a catalyst for further State-led social reforms, and helped to broaden the scope of political participation for the middle classes, the urban workers and the peasants—sectors, until then, overshadowed by the political influence of the Army, the Church, and the coffee elites.[220]

The shift towards a more permanent two-party system began with the legislative elections of 1964 when the PDC received 26 percent of total votes, a turnout that made it become the strongest opposition party, displacing the old PAR, which only received 15 percent of the votes. Even though there were other parties participating in subsequent elections, the two parties that received the majority of votes during the following twenty-four years were the party of the military and the PDC. In the elections of 1964, the PDC won thirty-six mayoralties throughout the country and took a hold of the mayoralty of the capital city San Salvador, with José Napoleón Duarte as mayor. Duarte was re-elected three consecutive times during which he carried out a series of public work projects (such as public lightning, modern markets, improvement of public transportation, more access to education, etc.) that benefited the city's working classes and that improved the party's popularity. Some of those measures were emulated by the country's government, with similar projects subsequently taken to the interior of the country, benefiting the working population of other cities as well as of small towns. The PDC was also the first political organization to publicly speak of the need to look after the economy of the low-income

[220] The coffee elites, the Catholic Church and the Army were the traditionally powerful groups of the country and the ones that shaped its politics. The Church began to change after the Second Episcopal Conference of Latin America (held in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968) when the attending bishops agreed to adopt the principle of "preferential option for the poor."

working classes by making a reality the establishment of the minimum wage standards that had been first proposed in the Constitution of 1950.[221] The importance of this call was recognized by the government of Rivera and by 1965 it had passed legislation that established minimum wages for industrial as well as agricultural workers.

Duarte's political activism along with his actions as mayor of the capital city also contributed to bring more people into the political process. One of the first popular sectors with which he established a connection was the community of "market-place women"—the vendors at public marketplaces. This group became strategic allies as the PDC's motto "your vote is your weapon" and other basic ideas about political participation and representation that Duarte had personally discussed with the women, were spread by word of mouth to the various other sectors of the population that visited the marketplace.[222] Duarte also helped form local self-help organizations that brought neighbors together to solve common needs. These groups learned to lobby with the city's government—a practice that helped disseminate the concept of participatory government among the urban working classes and, gradually, among the rest of the population. Evidence of that increase in political consciousness and desire for participation in the political processes is found, for example, in the voting registration and participation records of three consecutive Legislative Elections that took place during the decade in question [Table 3.1]. The records show an increase in both registration and participation and also a strong competition between two parties, the official PCN and the new PDC. From 1964 to 1968 the percentage of votes gained by the main opposition party, the PDC, increased from 26.1 to 43.3, while the votes for the party of the military during that

[221] "El Salvador," *Hispanic American Report* 17:2 (1964): 119.
[222] José Napoleón Duarte, *Duarte. My Story* (New York, NY: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1986), 55.

same period decreased from 58.6 to 47.7 percent. These numbers also may indicate the level of proselytism of the new party and its ability to attract new participants into the political arena.

Table3.1 Registration, Participation and Party Voting in the Parliamentary Elections of 1964, 1966, and 1968 in El Salvador

Year	Registration	Participation	PCN	PDC	PAR	PPS	Other
	% of eligible population	% of registered voters	% of votes received	% of votes received	% of votes received	% of voted received	% of votes received
1964	36.0	28.6	58.6	26.1	15.3	-	-
1966	39.5	32.1	53.6	31.2	6.9	2.4	5.9
1968	41.2	33.4	47.7	43.3	-	5.1	3.9

Sources: Dieter Nohlen, *Elections in the Americas. A Data Handbook. Volume 1: North America, Central America, and the Caribbean* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), 282, and Ronald H. McDonald, "Electoral Behavior and Political Development in El Salvador, 409.

About three years after the Christian Democratic Party was founded, the Salvadoran government, prompted by the growing strength of the new political parties and their constituency's demands for more representation, introduced a landmark political reform: a system of proportional representation in the Legislative Assembly.

Before 1963 legislative elections in El Salvador employed a single-member plurality vote system in which the political party that received the relative majority of votes won all the deputy seats allocated for a geographic region (a state, or a "department," as they are called in El Salvador). The winner-takes-all nature of the system did not allow opposition and minority parties to ever win any seats, as the official party always got the relative majority of votes. This situation happened in all the

legislative elections (held every two years) throughout the entire decade of the 1950s. Opposition parties were able to win only a few mayoralties, as legislative and municipal elections were held at the same time.

By 1958 the lack of representation of the sectors not aligned with the military began to create tensions, as they were realizing that without the possibility of representation in the legislative body, the freedom to associate and create political parties was merely symbolic. The creation of the PDC in 1960 as a response to the absence of political alternatives infused even more pressure to the government and the military institution. After the presidential elections of 1962, when the military faction that had taken power in 1948 had reasserted itself into the executive office under a brand new political party, the National Conciliation Party (PCN), the newly elected president, Colonel Julio Adalberto Rivera Carballo, announced in his inaugural address his intentions to reform the Legislative Assembly to allow representation of other political parties.[223]

The actual process towards reform began in May 1963, after Rivera officially sent to the Legislative Assembly a bill proposing to institute a system of proportional representation. Three months later the bill was approved, and Article 139 of the existing Electoral Law was substituted with new guidelines to elect deputies.[224] The guidelines were based on a method devised by Alexander Hamilton in 1791 for the House of

[223] Julio A. Rivera, "Mensaje del Teniente Coronel Julio A. Rivera al pueblo salvadoreño al tomar posesión de la Presidencia de la República" (San Salvador, ES: Secretaría Información de la Presidencia de la Republica de El Salvador, 1962), 13.
[224] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 365, "Se Sustituye el Art 139 de la Ley Electoral," *Diario Oficial*, 200, no. 154 (Agosto 21, 1963): 4273, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1963/08-agosto/agosto-1963_Parte14.pdf.

Representatives and used by the US Congress from 1852 through 1911.[225] With this system, each political party was to present a list of candidates for all possible seats allotted to a region. After the election, the total number of valid votes was to be divided by the number of seats allotted to that region to obtain the electoral quotient. The total number of votes received by each party was then to be divided by the electoral quotient and seats were to be awarded according to multiples thereof. If one or more seats were not filled because some parties had remaining votes of less than half the electoral quotient, those seats were to be awarded to parties with the highest total remainder.[226]

The adoption of the new system quickly ended the single-party monopoly in the Legislative Assembly. In the elections of 1964, for example, the two running opposition parties, the old PAR and the recently founded PDC, obtained a total of twenty seats against thirty-two for the official party. In the elections of 1966, the number of participating opposition parties had increased to four and the number of seats won to twenty-one.[227] By the 1968 elections, however, voter support for opposition parties, especially for the PDC, had greatly increased and the official party was close to losing control of the Assembly—the total seats won by the opposition increased to twenty-five and the official party's decreased to twenty seven.[228]

Even though the party of the military still managed to keep control of the Legislative Assembly in the following years, the introduction of the new system had significant consequences in the political life of the country. Many Salvadorans were learning, for the first time in their lives, about how democratic institutions worked. They

[225] Michel L. Balinski and H. Peyton Young, *Fair Representation. Meeting the Ideal One Man, One Vote* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982), 10-47.
[226] *El Salvador Election Factbook,* 36.
[227] Ibid, 30-31.
[228] Dieter Nohlen, *Elections in the Americas*, 282.

were realizing that, through their participation in the elections, through their political activism and through their demands, they could shape the process of political opening that started during the previous decade with the basic right to vote and to form political parties. Achieving proportional representation in the Legislative Assembly also fueled their desire for more democratic institutions and practices and their drive to work towards the achievement of those aspirations. Throughout the decade—as I show below—political activism increased among the working-class sectors, and, as a result, important social improvements were enacted. By the end of the 1970s, when the State began to revert to its old role of keeper of order and began to deny and take away the rights of representation (and other such politically progressive practices that had been attained), the people did not remain passive, but rather took up armed struggle in order to recover their lost rights.

Economic Reforms

In the 1960s El Salvador experienced a remarkable boom in its economic activities. Although agriculture continued to hold its central place, the manufacturing, construction, commerce, and services sectors developed at an unprecedented rate. This was the result of the increase in commercial exchange among the five Central American nations after the creation of the Central American Common Market in 1960. The Common Market was the main force that drove the decision-making process of both the government and the private sectors during the entire decade, and that led the nation to reach an important degree of industrialization as well as further improvements in its agriculture, tourism, and other economic sectors.

The efforts towards an economically integrated Central America began in the early 1950s. El Salvador played a central role in its establishment following the advice of technical experts from the UN who believed that a larger market had to be created to improve the chances of success of the government's projects for economic diversification.

The administration of President Osorio began to strategically establish good relations with all the neighboring countries (even Panama) by arranging friendly diplomatic visits, awarding honorary medals to important public figures, carrying sports events, student exchanges, hosting regional meetings dealing with social affairs and, in general, promoting the idea of a united Central America.[229] More official attempts towards this goal began in 1951 as the Salvadoran government invited the other Central American nations to attend a Conference of Foreign Ministers with the purpose of studying the possibilities of strengthening relations among the five States. The Salvadoran call was well received as, coincidentally at that moment, the other nations were under the administration of leaders who supported the old and unfulfilled dream of a united Isthmus.[230] Presidents Juan José Arevalo, from Guatemala (who ushered in the period nowadays known as the "ten years of Spring" in that country), Otilio Ulate, from Costa Rica, Juan Manuel Gálvez from Honduras, and Anastasio Somoza, from

[229] Just in 1950 for example, El Salvador hosted the Second Regional Seminar of Social Affairs, the Third Central American Chess Tournament, and the First Inter-American Women's Seminar.

[230] Uniting Central America as one nation was attempted several times throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first attempt was with the creation of the Federal Republic of Central America, which lasted from 1823 to 1841. A second and brief attempt was made in 1852 with the Federation of Central America. The last major nineteenth century attempt happened with the formation of the Greater Republic of Central America, which lasted from 1896 to 1898. All these attempts were unsuccessful due to the inability to find ideological consensus between the conservatives and liberal factions. The unions were usually dissolved after armed conflicts. The first twentieth-century attempt was made in 1921 with the creation of a second Federal Republic of Central America. This was simply a "paper" attempt as the four signatories (El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Costa Rica) signed a compromise for a future creation of a single state. The compromise did not develop any further.

Nicaragua, had all expressed their support for a union and their governments enthusiastically embraced the Salvadoran initiative. At the conference, the Salvadoran proposal, which argued for an economic union instead of a political one, was also well received by all delegations, and the representatives of all countries ultimately agreed in taking the first step towards that goal: the creation of the Organization of Central American States (Organización de Estados Centroamericanos, ODECA), whose primary objective was to seek the economic, social, and cultural cooperation and development of the five nations.

In addition to organizing the Conference of Foreign Ministers and promoting the creation of the ODECA, the Salvadoran Sate took further steps in its quest for economic integration by securing bilateral free trade agreements with its four neighbor countries—with Guatemala and Nicaragua in 1951, with Costa Rica in 1953, and with Honduras in 1957. The resulting increase in trade encouraged the other nations to seek their own bilateral agreements and, by 1958, the five countries had built an important trade network. That same year regional leaders began negotiations towards a larger arrangement which would finally set-in motion greater economic integration. The negotiations resulted in the Multilateral Treaty of Free Trade Agreement and Central American Integration, which was signed on December 13, 1960 and began to operate in June of the following year.[231] Under the terms of the treaty the participating nations eliminated tariffs for ninety-five percent of all imports originating in the area and established common tariffs for ninety-eight percent of all imports from external sources. Also, under the treaty the five nations created the Central American Bank for Economic

[231] *Tratado General de Integración Económica Centroamericana*, (Guatemala, GT: Gobierno de Guatemala, 1961), 1-5.

Integration, CABEI, which was to finance infrastructure programs such as roads and telecommunications and other economic initiatives that would benefit their joint trade efforts.

These new conditions led to fundamental changes in the Central American economy. Intra-area trade increased from $32.7 million in 1960 to $297.4 million in 1970—a growth of about seven hundred percent.[232] The production of industrial goods also expanded extraordinarily and was reflected in a change in the composition of traded goods. In 1960, for example, 59 percent of the regional trade was made up of agricultural products and 41 percent of industrial goods. Just four years after the creation of the Common Market, the composition had shifted to 32 percent for agricultural products and 62 percent for industrial goods.[233] El Salvador's contribution to that industrial output amounted to 20.2 percent.[234]

The rapid growth in the industrial sector that El Salvador experienced in the decade of the 1960s was supported by government-led measures and institutions and by an unprecedented influx of private local and foreign investment. The measures included the creation and improvement of economic infrastructure, the modification and expansion of fiscal incentives, and the establishment of an institution dedicated exclusively to the promotion of industrial development. To design and implement these measures the government received financial and technical support of the United States Agency for

---

[232] W.T. Wilford and G. Christou, "A Sectoral Analysis of Disaggregated Trade Flows in the Central American Common Market 1962-1970," *Journal of Common Market Studies* 12, no. 2 (1973): 159, http://doi:10.1111/j.1468-5965.tb00694.x.

[233] US Congress, *Central America: Some Observations on its Common Market, Binational Centers, and Housing Programs,* 89th Cong., 2d sess., House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, Subcommittee Print 66-746, 3 (Washington, DC, 1966).

[234] Naciones Unidas, Comisión Económica para America Latina, "Características principales del proceso y de la política de industrialización de Centroamérica, 1970 a 1979," (Mexico, DF: CEPAL, 1979), 36, http://hdl.handle.net/11362/26489.

International Development (USAID) and of the Alliance for Progress—a program developed in 1961 by President John Kennedy to help specifically with the Latin American needs and efforts for economic development. Also, after a decade of almost complete reliance on the advice of foreign technical missions, the Salvadoran government began to take a more active role and to make the economic planning a locally organized matter. In May, 1962, the government created the Consejo Nacional de Planificación y Coordinación Económica CONAPLAN (National Council for Economic Planning and Cooordination).[235] This entity aimed at taking maximum advantage of the existing resources and to coordinate for that purpose all the social and economic activities managed by the State. To provide guidance for the council, the government also created the Oficina Técnica de Planificación, whose staff had to be composed by at least seventy five percent of Salvadoran economic/technical advisors.[236] CONAPLAN began to operate with a First Biennial Plan (1964-65) which aimed to construct infrastructure for education, basic housing and health programs. After this the new entity continued to operate during the next two decades with larger plans to support economic development. The First Quinquennial Plan (1965-1970), for example, included reforms that overhauled the educational systems of the country, and the Second Quinquennial Plan (1973-1977)

[235] *Ley de Creación del Consejo Nacional de Planificación y Coordinación Económica* (San Salvador, ES: Secretaría de Información de la Presidencia de la Republica de El Salvador, 1962), 1-12.
[236] *Ley de Creación del Consejo Nacional de Planificación y Coordinación Económica*, 5.

included projects to support the inclusion of the working classes in the consumer economy and to expand the export market beyond Central America.[237]

The measures to stimulate the industrial sector, however, began to take place before the creation of CONAPLAN and served as incentives that instilled confidence among business entrepreneurs which led to an extraordinary increase in private investment and the consequential growth of the industrial activities. The two new infrastructure-aimed projects undertaken in the early years of the decade that would bring long term benefits to the economic projects and to the general population were the creation of the National Administration of Aqueducts and Drainage Systems (Administracion Nacional de Acueductos y Alcantarillados, ANDA), and of the National Administration of Telecommunications (Administración Nacional de Telecomunicaciones, ANTEL). These autonomous government agencies were given the tasks of taking over management, modernizing and expanding the country's water supply/treatment and telecommunications systems, respectively.

ANDA was created in 1961 with the financial support of a $ 2.7 million loan from the Inter-American Development Bank's Social Progress Trust Fund established by the Alliance for Progress and with the technical support of the UN through the Pan American Health Organization. Following recommendations of the PAHO given to the member nations of the emerging Common Market, ANDA was formed as an autonomous public

[237] See *Primer Plan de de la Nación Para el Desarrollo Económico y Social* (San Salvador, ES: Consejo Nacional de Planificación y Coordinación Económica, 1964), and *Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social 1973-1977* (San Salvador, ES: Consejo Nacional de Planificación y Coordinación Económica, 1972). There was also a Second Biennial plan for the period 1970-72. See *Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social1968-1972* (San Salvador, ES: Consejo Nacional de Planificación y Coordinación Económica, 1968). After 1979 CONAPLAN was turned into the Ministry of Planning and Coordination for Economic and Social Development—which lasted until 1995.

service agency with the objective to plan, execute, operate, maintain, and administer all aspects related to the nation's water supply and treatment.[238]

The new agency began its operations in October 27 of the same year by taking control of all the existing water distribution systems, which until then were operated by the municipalities, becoming the only water service agency for the entire nation. The idea for such centralization was to improve and expand the water supply and treatment services which, until 1960, were considered basic and deficient. A continuous supply of water, for example, only existed in some neighborhoods of the capital city, and the norm in the rest of the country was to receive water only for a few hours of the day, often at very low pressure. Also, not all the water was potable—only forty one percent of the urban population of the country was receiving water that had been disinfected with chlorine.[239] In terms of sewage, San Salvador was the only city that had installed a system of sewer pipes. However, the system had neither cesspits for initial collection nor treatment plants, resulting in wastewater joining the urban runoff system and being disposed of into ravines, creating health risks for many people.

Given that the new agency had a great degree of autonomy and governmental support, it quickly procured much needed technical and human resources to begin changing the existing deficiencies. In its first six years of operations ANDA installed a total of 117 pumping plants which helped to bring potable water (treated with chlorine and fluoride) to 121 municipalities throughout the country, serving a total of 77,418 individual connections. Sewage systems had also been installed in 54 municipalities and

[238] Directorio Civico Militar de El Salvador, Decreto No. 341, "Ley de la Administración Nacional de Acueductos y Alcantarillados," *Diario Oficial,*193, no. 191 (Octubre 19, 1961): 9443, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1961/10-octubre/octubre-1961_Parte22.pdf.
[239] *Memoria de lasActividades Realizadas por la Administración Nacional de Acueductos y Alcantarillados, ANDA 1967,* (San Salvador, ES: ANDA, 1967), 2.

were serving a total of 56,427 homes.[240] At the end of the following decade, however, the work of ANDA had expanded significantly as potable water service had reached 261 of the 262 municipalities of the country. It had installed a total of 159,547 individual drinking water connections, providing service to 67.4 percent (1,228,429 people) of the urban population and to 35.1 percent (899,962 people) of the rural population. Sewage service had also reached 41 percent of the urban population (859,481 homes), and 25 percent of the rural population (656,868 homes) had experienced the introduction of septic tanks.[241]

The work of ANDA helped the country in several ways. It provided the essential water supply and waste collection services to the emergent industrial sector. It also was a job generating institution that, by 1979, had created about 3,700 permanent jobs for technicians, administrators, skilled and unskilled laborers.[242] Last, and most importantly, the new agency contributed to improving the health of the population by providing clean water to almost all of the municipalities of the country and by modernizing, expanding, and often introducing for the first time, wastewater collection and treatment systems. The work of ANDA during its initial two decades, then, was an important factor that helped the country in its social and economic reform efforts.

The other new and large infrastructure project that helped the country advance in its quest towards industrialization and modernization was the creation of the National Administration of Telecommunications, ANTEL. This agency was similar to ANDA in terms of autonomy and in the fact that it centralized all aspects of the country

---

[240] *Memoria de las Actividades realizadas por la Administración Nacional de Acueductos y Alcantarillados,* 25.
[241] ANDA, *Boletín Estadístico No 1. Año 1979* (San Salvador, ES: ANDA. Unidad Estadística. 1979), 2-4.
[242] ANDA, *Boletín Estadístico, 32.*

telecommunications system. ANTEL was created in 1963 and began to operate with the assistance of a $9.5 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Its initial project was to begin the process of modernization of the country's old and limited network (which at the time only had seven thousand lines) with the installation of twenty six thousand new phone lines in the largest urban centers of the country—the capital city of San Salvador, the western city of Santa Ana, and the eastern city of San Miguel.[243] The country still lacked technical expertise for the project so ANTEL hired three European firms: Ericsson from Sweden, Siemens-Halske from Germany, and General Electric, from England.[244] By 1968 the project had satisfactorily concluded and, in addition to the increase in phone lines, the country had also been equipped with a high quality microwave system that improved communications with the five members of the Common Market, with a high frequency radio telephone system for efficient long distance service to the United States and Europe, and with international teletype ("Telex") service.[245] The demand for more phone lines, however, continued to increase and ANDA started two more expansion projects in the following decade.

The impact of ANTEL for the country was similar to that of ANDA in that it provided an essential service to the emergent industrial sector in the main cities of the country, as the efficiency of these enterprises depended on effective means of

[243] World Bank, "Appraisal of the Telephone Expansion Program. The National Telecommunications Administration (ANTEL) El Salvador," (Washington, D.C: World Bank Group, 1963), I, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/860051468233685066/El-Salvador-Telephone-Expansion-Program-Project.
[244] "El Salvador Lets Phone Contracts," *New York Times*, May 31, 1964.
[245] World Bank, "Report and Recommendation of the President to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Loan to Administracion Nacional de Telecomunicaciones With the Guarantee of El Salvador for a Second Telecommunications Project," (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group, 1972), 8. http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/699871468023337442/El-Salvador-Second-Telecommunications-Project. Telex was a long distance text message transfer system that used machines called tele-typewriters or tele-printers. It replaced the old Morse-code telegraph system and was in turn superseded by the Fax machine.

communication. It was also a job generator that, by the mid-1970s had given permanent employment to about 3,500 people around the country. Although the agency was initially formed to supply a basic service to the industrial sector, it undertook subsequent expansion projects aimed to benefit common working-class Salvadorans in low income urban and rural areas.

The significance of ANDA and ANTEL for El Salvador during the 1960s goes beyond their contributions to provide basic services. They also had a socio-cultural impact, as they were among the first important institutions that began to alter the social imaginary of many laboring class youth by opening the possibility of employment outside the traditional agricultural sectors. This happened because (unlike the initial reform projects that maintained the industrial and other non-agricultural jobs in and around the capital city) ANDA and ANTEL took their projects beyond the capital city, into small towns and rural areas, established regional offices, warehouses and various types of operations centers, and generated temporary and permanent jobs in the process. ANDA and ANTEL also made their presence felt in the popular culture of the nation through their participation in the local festivities of cities and towns where they had an operation center. Their parade floats, for example, were among the most admired and anticipated by the population. They also had their own magazine, musical group, and their own soccer team, which helped to increase their visibility and to promote the political and social changes that the country was experiencing as well as new popular cultural expressions. ANTEL's Orchestra, for example, recorded several LPs that helped popularized rhythms like Boogaloo, Guaguancó, and Salsa, and helped disseminate the idea of a united isthmus. Their song "Central America" for instance, spoke of a person who traveled

without restrictions among the five countries as if they were simply states of a larger nation.[246] The ANTEL Soccer Team, which was in the country's top professional soccer league, also became particularly popular—the historic and perhaps most famous soccer player of El Salvador, Jorge "El Mágico" González started his career playing for this team in 1975.

A job at either of these institutions, even if it was as a simple telegram messenger, then, was life changing for the job holder since it provided a steady income, good benefits, and the prestige of being part of an institution that was actively participating in projects to advance the nation towards modernity. It was during these years that much of the youth in the countryside began to dream of replacing their tillage tools for the ability to read and write, to use the telegraph or the telex machine, to weld water pipes, or to learn bookkeeping—and find a job at ANTEL, ANDA, or anywhere in the new emerging economic sectors.

In addition to the improvements in the services of water supply/management and telecommunications, the government also continued to expand and improve the infrastructure projects that had been started the previous decade and that had served as foundations for the ongoing processes of economic diversification. Electrical production, for example, was increased with the construction of the Guajoyo Hydroelectric Plant at the Guija Lake and with the addition of generators at the Fifth of November Dam. These improvements permitted to increase production from 60 to 115 thousand kilowatts of electricity within 1960 to 1965, meeting the increasing demands generated by the

[246] Orquesta ANTEL, band, "Centro America," by Ferni Balaf, track 5 on A*NTEL Vol. IV*, Boni Discos, 33½ rpm.

emerging economic sectors (manufacture, commerce, services).[247] The paved road network was also expanded to a total of 5,369 miles with the construction of seven trunk roads and four feeder roads that connected the country's sea ports and main cities with San Salvador.[248] The new trunk roads supported the increasing industrial activity and the feeder roads intended to open up more export opportunities for the agricultural sector, which was also growing after the introduction of fertilizers and other modern agricultural techniques.[249] The maritime ports and the Ilopango Airport also experienced important improvements. The port of Acajutla, for example, was expanded with a new four-dock wharf, which increased the port's capability to receive up to six large commercial vessels simultaneously. The Ilopango Airport as well was improved to be able to receive Boeing 707 Jets (one of the largest planes operating in those years) and to accommodate the increasing number of passengers, which grew from 83,026 in 1963 to 140,153 in 1969.[250]

Along with infrastructure improvements the government also put in place a modified plan of fiscal incentives and credit support dedicated exclusively to the industrial sector. The 1952 Law to Foment Industries of Transformation was updated in 1961 with the Law of Industrial Development, giving preference to industrial enterprises that manufactured commercial goods not yet being produced in the country and to

---

[247] World Bank, "Appraisal of the Power Expansion Program. Comision Ejecutiva, Del Rio Lempa (CEL) El Salvador," (Washington, D.C: World Bank Group, 1963), I, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/642021468021639892/El-Salvador-Fourth-Power-Project.

[248] World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas del Desarrollo Económico de El Salvador," (Washington, D.C: WorldBank Group, 1971), Tabla 8.21, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/941951468027659638/Situacion-y-perspectivas-del-desarrollo-economico-de-El-Salvador.

[249] World Bank, "Report and Recommendation of the President to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Supplementary Loan to the Republic of El Salvador for the Revised Third Highway Project," (Washington, D.C:World Bank Group, 1967), 3-4, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/957161468235479649/El-Salvador-Third-Highway-Project-supplementary.

[250] "Movimiento de Pasajeros por Vía," *Boletín Estadístico. Organo de la Dirección General de Estadística y Censos. II Epoca,* no. 60 (1963): 543, and "Transporte Aereo de Pasajeros y Carga," *Boletín Estadístico. Organo de la Dirección General de Estadística y Censos. II Epoca,* no. 84 (1969): 160.

existing industries that would substantially modify their operations with technical equipment in order to increase production, improve the quality of the products, and lower costs.[251] The fiscal incentives included ten years of duty-free privileges for importing all the necessary materials and equipment to start a plant and a reduction of fifty percent on property, sales, and income taxes for the first five years after the plants' establishment or modification. In return for these privileges, the investing firms were to sell their output at reasonable prices for the Salvadoran/Central-American consumers, utilize national raw materials to the extent possible, and supply the government with data on development, production and financial condition of the enterprise. [252] In terms of credit support, the government also modified the Salvadoran Institute to Foment Production, INSAFOP (which was created in 1955 to help with the economic diversifications efforts) and turned into the Salvadoran Institute for Industrial Development, INSAFI in 1962.[253] This reformed institution played a central role in the process of industrialization as it was in charge of promotion, technical services, credit granting, the implementation of industrial policy, and channeling resources to the industrial sector, among other tasks.

The strengthening of the physical, legal, and financial foundations gave a tremendous boost to the process of industrialization. Investment expenditures in the sector from 1962 to 1969 amounted to a total of $114.66 million in machinery and $183.9 in fixed assets. [254] Forty percent of the investment needs were covered by local capital (from the small group of industrial entrepreneurs already reinvesting their earnings and

[251] Junta de Gobierno de El Salvador, Decreto No. 64, "Ley de Fomento Industrial," *Diario Oficial*, 190, no. 14 (Enero 20, 1961): 455, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1961/01-enero/enero-1961_Parte16.pdf.
[252] Ibid.
[253] Directorio Civico Militar de El Savlador, Decreto No.497, "Ley de Creación del Instituto Salvadoreño de Fomento Industrial," *Diario Oficial*,193:238 (Diciembre 26, 1961): 12270.
[254] World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas," Table 8.8. The total investment amount of $298.56 million in 1969 is equivalent to around $2,100,307, 983.65 today.

from coffee and cotton producers), fourteen percent by local financing institutions (such as INSAFI and local private banks), and about twenty one percent by foreign capital.[255] This unprecedented economic support for the sector naturally resulted in the rapid growth of manufacturing establishments. The number of plants jumped from 258 in 1960 to 1282 by 1970.[256]

The two areas where industrial activities had started in the previous decade, consequentially, grew to become large and modern industrial parks in the 1960s. The small fishing town of Acajutla became the Acajutla Port Complex. It boasted large, modern warehouses, a $10 million petroleum refinery (the Refinería Petrolera Acajutla S.A., RASA—which was processing 14,000 barrels per day of petroleum products), a mechanized dry grain storage facility of 88,000,000 metric tons capacity (Almacenadora Centroamericana S.A., ALCASA), and a fertilizer/chemical products plant (Fertilizantes de Centroamerica, FERTICA), among other establishments. The Ilopango area, where the textile mill IUSA started to operate in 1956, however, grew to become the largest industrial park in the country. Among the recognized international industrial interests that established operations there were Phelps Dodge with an aluminum and wire cable plant, the Philips Company with an electric light bulb and appliances factory, Reynolds Aluminum with a sheet-metal plant, Sherwin Williams with a paint factory, Westinghouse with a factory that produced welding rods, radios, refrigerators, TV sets and related products, and Kimberly Clark with a paper converter factory.[257] Local names included industries that would eventually become ingrained in the country's popular

[255] World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas," Appendix 11.
[256] See note 125.
[257] H. McKinley Conway, "El Salvador: A Bright Spot in Central America," *Industrial Development*, June 1963, 8-10.

culture. The shoe factory ADOC, for example, was the first factory of its kind that offered affordable shoes for the low-income working classes. Their most popular shoes were called "burros" and they were known for their endurance and long-lasting characteristics much appreciated by agricultural workers. The soft drink bottling company La Cascada created what would become the national soda, Kolashampan, and Pan Lido was an industrial bakery that specialized in cakes and pastries and that, with its own salesrooms around the country, became an esteemed product that is still highly popular nowadays.

The type of industry that predominated throughout the decade was focused on the substitution of imports of non-durable consumer goods (food stuffs, beverages, tobacco, textiles, shoes, and clothing). The plants dedicated to this type of production accounted for 74.8 percent of total industries in 1969. The industries that produced intermediate goods (paper products, rubber products, glass products, chemicals, petrochemicals, non-metallic minerals, cooper wire, tin cans, etc.) accounted for 18.4 percent, and the industries that produced consumer durables and capital goods (steel bars, pipes, hand tools, machine tools, pulleys, mill discs, storm grills, home appliances, transport equipment, and furniture) accounted for 6.8 percent.[258]

The growth in the number of manufacturing plants gave the nation high supply capabilities and shifted the country's status of net importer into that of net exporter within the Common Market. The balance of trade with the region, which had been -0.8 in 1960, jumped to +20.4 by 1967, when about eighty seven percent of the country's total

[258] Naciones Unidas, "Características principales," 27.

industrial production was supplying the needs of the Common Market. [259] El Salvador became, in the second half of the decade, the top exporter of textiles, shoes and clothing, chemicals, paper products, and metalworking products.[260]

The impact of industrial activities in the economy was significant. The sector grew at an average annual rate of 8.1 during the decade (a significant increase from the 1950's average of 4.5) and the total of industrial exports expanded from 5.8 to 28.6 percent (the percentage of agricultural exports, consequently, dropped from 85 percent at the beginning of the decade to 66 percent by 1968).[261] Annual revenues increased from $28.4 million in 1963 to $81.7 million in 1968 and the percentage of the sector's contribution to the country's GDP grew from 14.6 in 1960 to 19.5 in the same period.[262] By the end of the decade, industry was generating direct employment for 101.8 thousand people, which represented ten percent of the economically active population.[263] The average daily wage in the sector was $2.97, which was higher than the daily wage of industrial workers in Singapore ($2.51/day), Philippines ($2.07/day), Korea ($1.68/day), and Taiwan ($1.38/day).[264]

Like in the industrial sector, agricultural production also expanded during this decade [Table 3.2]. Although the percentage of participation of the main crop—coffee—in total exports decreased (from 82 to 44 percent) as result of the boom in industrial production, the crop still remained the most important item in the country's world trade. Thanks to the use of fertilizers, plague control chemicals, and the development of two

[259] W. T. Wilford, "The Central American Common Market: Trade Patterns after a Decade of Union," *Nebraska Journal of Economics and Business* 12, no. 3 (1973): 17, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40472456, and World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas," Table 8.4.
[260] Naciones Unidas, "Características principales," Cuadro 26.
[261] *Agriculture and Trade of El Salvador* (Washington, D.C: US Department of Agriculture, 1971), 3.
[262] World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas," Datos Básicos and Table 3.3.
[263] Naciones Unidas, "Características principales," Cuadro 18.
[264] World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas," Table 8.10.

improved varieties (at the Salvadoran Institute for Coffee Research), production actually increased from 109,000 metric tons of coffee beans in 1960 to 150,000 metric tons in 1969.[265] This improvement in production along with a slight and gradual increase of international coffee prices resulted in better revenues: in the period 1963 to 1967, the value of coffee bean exports escalated from $75 to $97million.[266] Cotton and sugar cane production and revenues also expanded. Cotton cultivation expanded from 43,000 hectares in 1960 to 87,000 in 1965, and as a result, yearly revenues went from $28 to $37 million in the same period.[267] The production of sugar cane, the third export crop of the country, also went up thanks to the introduction of better varieties from the Caribbean and Florida. The annual yield went from 619,000 metric tons in 1960 to 1,328,000 in 1968.[268]

In terms of staple crops such as corn and rice, El Salvador also achieved the feat of turning from food importer into exporter. Thanks to the collaboration of the Rockefeller Foundation's International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center in Mexico, El Salvador was able to cultivate two new corn hybrids that increased production from 5-16 to 52-84 bushels per acre. This resulted, by 1970, in a total production of 621.15 million kilograms, which fulfilled the internal need of 620 million kilograms and produced a surplus of 1.15 million kilograms that were sent to external markets.[269]

---

[265] *Agriculture and Trade of El Salvador*, 23.
[266] Ibid, 24.
[267] Ibid. The highest output in cotton production during this decade (82,000 tons) happened in 1964. After this year it decreased due to various factors such as adverse weather, large build-up of insect population, falling world prices, and the shift in land use to food crops, particularly corn. Nevertheless cotton output began to recover in the last two years of the decade.
[268] Ibid.
[269] *Agriclture and Trade of El Salvador,* 76.

Table3.2 Area harvested and production of principal crops from 1960 to 1970 in El Salvador

Years	Area Harvested (x 1000 hectares)						
	coffee	cotton	sugar cane	corn	rice	beans	sorghum
1960-64 av.	125	87	9	182	14	27	100
1965	142	82	12	193	13	24	111
1966	142	49	15	208	20	26	108
1967	142	40	15	192	28	28	104
1968	142	51	17	200	27	32	114
1969	142	49	17	194	22	33	114
1970	142	63	15	200	27	36	113
	Production (x 1000 metric tons)						
1960-64 av.	109	64	619	187	29	13	96
1965	109	51	948	203	32	17	106
1966	118	39	1,190	266	47	15	115
1967	144	35	1,165	209	72	17	108
1968	114	45	1,328	258	74	21	124
1969	150	45	1,039	279	33	26	128
1970	120	54	1,142	330	36	30	130

Source: Agriculture and Trade of El Salvador (Washington, D.C: US Department of Agriculture, 1971), 23.

According to a 1968 article in the *Los Angeles Times*, Iowa farmer Roswell Garst and Tropical Agricultural specialist for the Agency for International Development Benjamin Birdsall, also participated in the efforts to develop better staple crops in El Salvador. Thanks to their carefully planned selection of seeds and the right amounts of fertilizer and insecticide, the country surprisingly became a rice exporter by 1967, when production had jumped to 72,000 metric tons from the 29,000 in 1960. This

multiplication of agricultural production, according to the same article, saved the country about $30 million worth of food imports, and helped many farmers to transition from subsistence into commercial agriculture.[270]

Another economic sector that experienced changes during the 1960s was the tourism industry. In the previous decade a local tourism culture, without commercial aspirations, was developed in order to establish a base for the sector. From 1960 onwards, however, the government established strong foundations for commercial tourism focused on international visitors. The Tourism Board was converted into the Salvadoran Tourism Institute which, like INSAFI, served as mediator for entrepreneurs who wanted to invest in the sector. New tourism enterprises received the same fiscal incentives offered to industrial establishments, and as a result the country saw the proliferation of new hotels, motels, restaurants, and related services enterprises (food suppliers, transportation, entertainment, etc.) around the country. An important State sponsored event that aimed at helping the sector was the Salvadoran International Fair, which was carried out three times, first in 1965, then in 1966, and lastly in 1968. The event's goal was to project a positive image of the country to the international visitors/participants, which came from a total of 15 countries from Central, South and North America, Europe, and Asia. The number of presentation/sales booths during the second event, for example, was six hundred, two hundred of which were to present the variety of commercial activities taking place in El Salvador. In the latter years of the decade, the country also began to receive Cruise Ships, which were by then able to dock at the modern wharf in the port of Acajutla. With an improved road network, cruise tourists were able to reach the modern hotel accommodations in the capital city San Salvador, visit the local archeological sites,

[270] "Iowa Farmer Boosts Salvador Agriculture," *Los Angeles Times,* March 7, 168.

waterparks and other sites of interests, and even take a trip to the neighbor country Guatemala. The decade of the 1960s, thus, saw the strengthening of the foundations for commercial tourism, which would develop more in the 1970s.

The outstanding development of the country's industrial and agricultural activities and the consequential growth of other sectors created an extraordinary economic boom. El Salvador was no longer seen only as the land of volcanoes and oxcarts. It was a country with a dynamic economy that had the ability to offer foreign visitors investment opportunities, modern hotels, transportation, foodstuffs, sports, entertainment and any of the amenities found in the developed western societies. This new face was noticed by the international mass media as well as academic circles, and soon there was a variety of publications containing high degrees of praise for the small nation. *The Christian Science Monitor*, for example, called El Salvador "the most progressive country in Latin America," *The Washington Post* referred to it as a champion of the Alliance for Progress, and the *Chicago Tribune* as a "Giant Among Latin Minis."[271]

Business-specific publications were even more enthusiastic and their articles presented the country as an idyllic business utopia. The magazine *Industrial Development*, for example, dedicated its entire June 1963 issue to a long article titled "El Salvador: A Bright Spot in Central America" (fig. 3.1). The article presented the country as a politically and economically stable nation that had "impressive signs of growth" and "great potential for investment." It displayed a variety of images showing the atmosphere of economic boom of those years, it explained the role of the Common Market in the generation of profits, it talked about the climate of comfort, stability and safety offered by

[271] Adelaide Leich, "Modern Trends in Salvador Invite Rise in Tourist Trade," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 1, 1959; "Alliance Finds Champion in El Salvador," *Washington Post*, July 8, 1962; Barry Bishop, "El Salvador: Giant Among Latin Minis," *Chicago Tribune*, October 13, 1967.

the State, and about the advantages of a "bottomless labor pool" that the small nation offered. The article also spoke about how the Alliance for Progress provided additional assurance for US firms considering investment in the country as it reinforced the environment of compromise of the Salvadoran government with the U.S. government and the private/capitalist sectors.

Another publication that projected a positive perspective about the county was the book *Rapid Development in Small Economies: The Example of El Salvador*. This book was published in 1967 by Prager, an editorial house that specialized in reference works for the academic, business, and government communities. Its writer, David R. Raynolds, was an historian who spent three years (1958-1961) in El Salvador as a member of the United States Foreign Service. He attributed the "impressive growth record" of El Salvador to two factors: the sound economic decisions of the Salvadoran political leadership, and the fact that governmental centralization was avoided in the economic reform projects. He also wrote, among other things, about how the small nation had become characterized as the "Japan of Central America" because of its achievements and the level of competition it posed to the other members of the Common Market and commented on how the Salvadoran experience could serve as a model for other developing nations.

The discourses used in these publications, however, cannot be taken literally, as they had both political and economic origins. The portrayal of the country as the "bright spot" of the isthmus, for example was expressed in a publication aimed at motivating business entrepreneurs to invest in the projects of industrialization. The idea of El Salvador's economy as an example for other nations because of its meteoric rise could

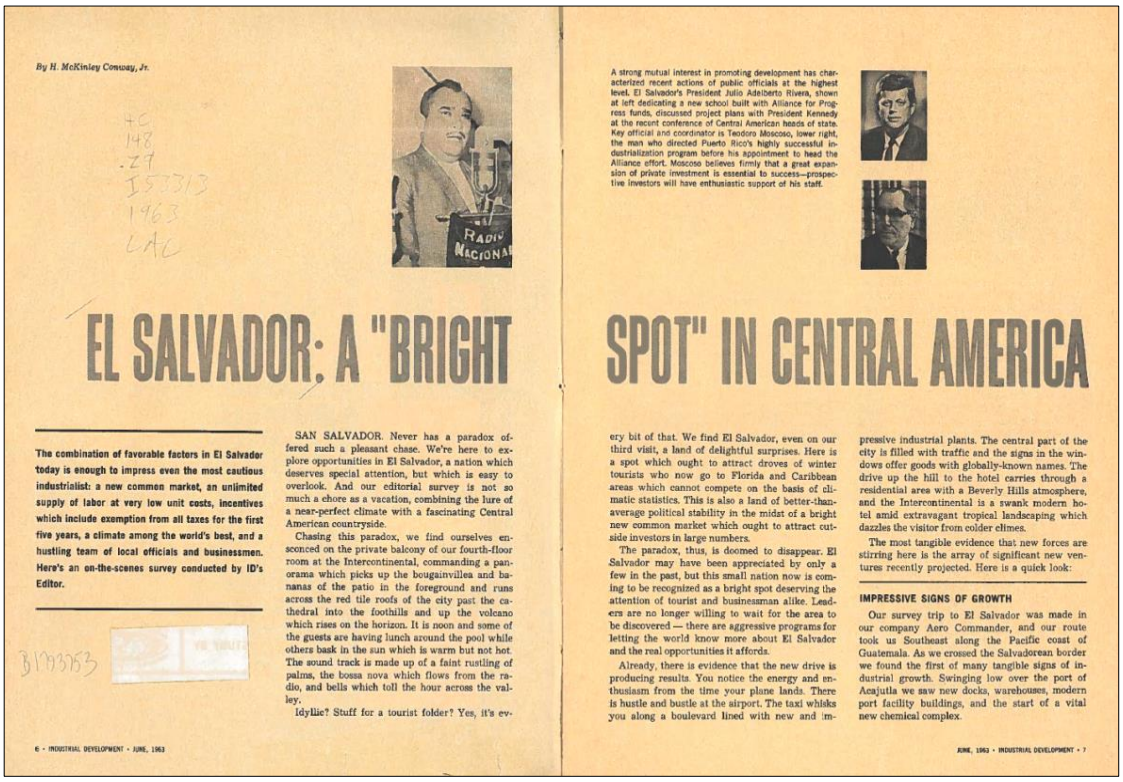
also be analyzed by taking into account that its author, Raynolds, had been a member of the US Foreign Service. Consequently the "exemplary" aspect of the study could have had the intention of showing other developing nations how embracing capitalism could lead to rapid economic growth. In a similar manner, the other types of publications that praised the country's ongoing reforms might have been attempting to convey the idea of how beneficial was for developing nations to be under the US sphere of influence.

These positive portrayals of the country in the international media, nevertheless, are unique. At no other time has the international press focused on the positive aspects of the smallest of the Central American Nations. The only other country of the isthmus that has continuously received praise has been Costa Rica—praise based on key factors: a fairly homogeneous white population, wide distribution of land ownership, and deep interest in education.[272] These elements, according to scholars and other writers, allowed Costa Rica to develop into the only truly democratic nation of the isthmus, worthy of being called "the Switzerland of Central America." While El Salvador couldn't compete with the degree of education and political development that Costa Rica had achieved (literacy rate in 1970, for example, was 89 % while in El Salvador was only 59%, and the country had abolished the army after its civil war in 1948), the economic improvements the small nation reached during the studied period led to some researchers, as shown above, to call the small nation "the Japan of Central America."[273] This was the first and only time this country has been referred to with appellatives different than the usual

[272] See, for example, Leo Waibel, "White Settlement in Costa Rica," *Geographical Review* 29, no. 4 (1939):529-560, http://www.jstor.org/stable/209828, Joseth F. Thorning, "Costa Rica: A Rural Democracy," *World Affairs* 108, no. 3 (1945): 171-180, http://www.jstor.org/stable/20664182, and James L. Busey, "The Presidents of Costa Rica," *The Americas* 18, no.1 (1961):55-70, http://www.jstor.org/stable/979752. After the Costa Rican Civil War in 1948 another key factor was added to the discourse on this country: the abolition of the army.

[273] Alfred Gonzalez Cuzan, "Centralization and Scope: Political Structure and Policy Performance in Costa Rica and El Salvador" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1975), 18.

"underdeveloped, poor, undemocratic, and violent." Its degree of industrial production certainly became competitive. The balance of trade with the Common Market for these two nations in 1971, for example, was of +17.3 million for El Salvador and -30.3 for Costa Rica.[274]



By H. McKinley Conway, Jr.

EL SALVADOR: A "BRIGHT SPOT" IN CENTRAL AMERICA

The combination of favorable factors in El Salvador today is enough to impress even the most cautious industrialist: a new common market, an unlimited supply of labor at very low unit costs, incentives which include exemption from all taxes for the first five years, a climate among the world's best, and a hustling team of local officials and businessmen. Here's an on-the-scenes survey conducted by ID's Editor.

SAN SALVADOR. Never has a paradox offered such a pleasant chase. We're here to explore opportunities in El Salvador, a nation which deserves special attention, but which is easy to overlook. And our editorial survey is not so much a chore as a vacation, combining the lure of a near-perfect climate with a fascinating Central American countryside.

Chasing this paradox, we find ourselves ensconced on the private balcony of our fourth-floor room at the Intercontinental, commanding a panorama which picks up the bougainvillea and bananas of the patio in the foreground and runs across the red tile roofs of the city past the cathedral into the foothills and up the volcano which rises on the horizon. It is noon and some of the guests are having lunch around the pool while others bask in the sun which is warm but not hot. The sound track is made up of a faint rustling of palms, the bossa nova which flows from the radio, and bells which toll the hour across the valley.

Idyllic? Stuff for a tourist folder? Yes, it's every bit of that. We find El Salvador, even on our third visit, a land of delightful surprises. Here is a spot which ought to attract droves of winter tourists who now go to Florida and Caribbean areas which cannot compete on the basis of climatic statistics. This is also a land of better-than-average political stability in the midst of a bright new common market which ought to attract outside investors in large numbers.

The paradox, thus, is doomed to disappear. El Salvador may have been appreciated by only a few in the past, but this small nation now is coming to be recognized as a bright spot deserving the attention of tourist and businessman alike. Leaders are no longer willing to wait for the area to be discovered — there are aggressive programs for letting the world know more about El Salvador and the real opportunities it affords.

Already, there is evidence that the new drive is producing results. You notice the energy and enthusiasm from the time your plane lands. There is hustle and bustle at the airport. The taxi whisks you along a boulevard lined with new and impressive industrial plants. The central part of the city is filled with traffic and the signs in the windows offer goods with globally-known names. The drive up the hill to the hotel carries through a residential area with a Beverly Hills atmosphere, and the Intercontinental is a swank modern hotel amid extravagant tropical landscaping which dazzles the visitor from colder climes.

The most tangible evidence that new forces are stirring here is the array of significant new ventures recently projected. Here is a quick look:

IMPRESSIVE SIGNS OF GROWTH

Our survey trip to El Salvador was made in our company Aero Commander, and our route took us Southeast along the Pacific coast of Guatemala. As we crossed the Salvadorean border we found the first of many tangible signs of industrial growth. Swinging low over the port of Acajutla we saw new docks, warehouses, modern port facility buildings, and the start of a vital new chemical complex.

A strong mutual interest in promoting development has characterized recent actions of public officials at the highest level. El Salvador's President Julio Adalberto Rivera, shown at left dedicating a new school built with Alliance for Progress funds, discussed project plans with President Kennedy at the recent conference of Central American heads of state. Key official and coordinator is Teodoro Moscoso, lower right, the man who directed Puerto Rico's highly successful industrialization program before his appointment to head the Alliance effort. Moscoso believes firmly that a great expansion of private investment is essential to success—prospective investors will have enthusiastic support of his staff.

Figure 3.1. June 1963 issue of *Industrial Development*, dedicated in its entirety to El Salvador. The article contains phrases like "impressive signs of growth," "evidence of progress," "modern and functional architecture," and "extensive economic activity" to describe the country—these in addition to the title of the article, which nowadays would be a strange or uncommon way to refer to El Salvador.

Social Reforms: Labor

The social reforms foundations set in the 1950s and the rapid growth and diversification of the economy that came after the creation of the Common Market led to

[274] W.T. Wilford and G. Christou, "A Sectoral Analysis," 161.

important achievements in the areas of labor, health, housing and education in the 1960s. These achievements, in turn, were reflected in a re-composition of the social sectors and in more dynamic socio-political relations—the middle classes experienced great expansion and the general population attained more leverage to negotiate improvements in their life conditions with political and economic opportunities.

The labor sector saw two important developments in this decade that helped improve the people's agency: the creation of the country's first Labor Code and the growth and the strengthening of labor unions. The Labor Code, which was approved by the Legislative Assembly on January 22, 1963, was the first major piece of legislation of the decade through which the government expressed its intention to look after the labor rights of the population.[275] The Code included a compilation of labor statutes that had accumulated over the past decade and new directives intended to regulate work in the industrial and other emergent sectors. The laws were codified with the aid of technicians from the International Labor Organization (ILO), of which El Salvador was a member. ILO experts arrived in the country in 1962 to help organize these laws and also to study and determine minimum wage standards for agricultural workers.[276]

Some of the most significant directives contained in the Code mandated, for example, that at least 90 percent of industrial plant employees must be Salvadoran nationals and that their salaries must represent 85 percent of total payroll. Employment contracts were declared mandatory. Paid vacations, holidays, sick leave, terminal pay, an annual bonus, and death benefits were also stipulated. The hours of work were regulated (8/day and no more than 44/week) and those who worked night shifts and over time were

[275] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 241, "Codigo de Trabajo," *Diario Oficial*,198, no. 22 (Febrero 1, 1963): 906-956, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1963/02-febrero/febrero-1963_Parte1.pdf.
[276] See *Labor Law and Practice.*

to receive extra remuneration. Women were entitled to equal pay to that of men for the same work in the same plant, and minimum wages were to be established periodically by a Minimum Wage Council that would work under the directives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare.

Support for and enforcement of the Labor Code was provided by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare, which was the head entity directing the departments of Labor, Labor Inspection, Social Welfare and Apprenticeship. The Department of Labor supervised the creation and functioning of work associations, mediated individual and collective labor disputes, and supervised the internal work rules in private enterprises. The Department of Labor Inspection was in charge of the physical inspection of commercial, industrial, and agricultural installations to ensure these were not in violation of labor laws or regulations. The Department of Social Welfare was in charge of investigating accidents and industrial disease in the private industry and of determining the type of medical services to be maintained in establishments with more than fifty workers/employees. The Department of Apprenticeship, lastly, prepared worker training programs, supervised the employment of minors, and studied the conditions affecting female workers.

In total, the departments under the Ministry of Labor had 396 employees in its first year.[277] One hundred and forty-nine of these were labor inspectors who, just in the first year after the Code was passed, made a total of 21,483 (16,100 in the industrial and commercial sectors and 5,383 in agriculture) inspections and reported 16,100 infractions (of which seventy five percent were corrected by employers upon notification and twenty

[277] US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Law*, 15.

five percent were processed for fines).[278] The country's first Labor Code, thus, was a professionally codified set of laws that were backed by an organized apparatus dedicated to support its goals and enforce its directives. It was a significant advance in the reform processes towards social justice that took place during period as it demonstrated the State's disposition to provide workers with legal protection.

The second major labor development that took place in the 1960s was the strengthening of labor unions. This process began with the government extending the right to organize through the Labor Code, continued with the increase in the number of unions for wage workers in the new economic sectors (industry, commerce, and services), and, in the second half of the decade, developed into mass and successful labor strikes that accomplished important demands and that served as precedents and inspiration for the future union and political activities of the nation.

Salvadoran workers had been organizing in more numbers since 1950, after they were officially granted the right to do so through the new Constitution. From that year on workers could officially join any of three types of unions: craft unions (formed by persons in the same trade, i.e., shoemaker, blacksmith, tailor), industrial unions (formed by persons in the same industrial activity), and plant unions (formed by persons in the same establishment or autonomous government institution). In 1963 the Labor Code expanded union strength by granting legal recognition to union-federations (formed by ten or more labor unions) and confederations (formed by three or more federations), which had started to organize since 1957. The largest confederations were the General Confederation of Unions (Confederación General de Sindicatos, CGS), and the General Confederation of Salvadoran Workers (Confederación General de Trabajadores

[278] Ibid, 19.

Salvadoreños, CGTS). The year the Labor Code was passed the total number of labor unions (confederated and independent) was 93 and total membership was 28,000.[279] By 1970 the number of unions had increased to 113 and membership grew to 44,150. All these statistics, however, represent only urban and industrial workers. There are no statistics on rural and agricultural workers since they were not allowed to form unions. The only types of organization that some agricultural workers knew in the 1960s were the cooperatives that had been formed with the help of the government in the previous decade and those that were, at the time, emerging with the help of the Catholic Church.

Salvadoran urban and industrial labor unions also developed during this decade their ability to negotiate improvements to their work and living conditions. In the early years they achieved their goals by supporting the enactment of labor legislation and through collective bargaining. Beginning in 1965, however, unions began to take a more direct approach and fought to obtain their goals by making use of their right to strike. The strikes conducted during the second half of the decade were meaningful as they were mostly successful and served to incentivize more people to join labor unions and take a more active stance in their relations with employers.

Some of the initial strikes that happened just after the passing of the Labor Code were carried out by workers seeking better wages. The first was conducted by the construction laborers who were erecting the new building for the Benjamin Bloom Children's Hospital. Their victory inspired the public hospital doctors, who conducted a three-day strike that was also successful. The doctors in turn inspired a nurses' strike, which accomplished its wage-increase demands as well.

[279] US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Law*, 20-22.

The first major strike of the decade, however, began on January 17, 1967, and was conducted by urban bus drivers also seeking improved wages. The decision to strike was taken after the demand of a seventy-five percent wage increase was not accepted by bus company owners. Although there was police intervention to try to stop some of the strikers' actions (like closing bus depot entrances and stations), public transport in the capital city San Salvador was almost paralyzed as only taxis were able to operate. The government attempted to end the strike by offering a subsidy. The workers did not concede and the strike ended only when both sides reached an agreement to raise wages by fifty percent on January 19. The relatively short strike demonstrated that these workers had the ability to force owners to acquiesce to their demands.[280]

On February 13 of the same year the workers of the largest textile plant in Central America, IUSA, started a strike after efforts to reach an agreement for improved wages failed. The workers received broad support since they belonged to the largest union confederation—the General Confederation of Unions, CGS. About 1,800 participants among workers and supporters resisted for eight days until agreements were reached.

These victories sparked union activism among various sectors, as the prospect of improving labor conditions now seemed reachable by exercising the right to strike. On April 6, 1967, 240 workers from the steel mill Acero S.A. went on strike demanding a wage increase of forty percent, improvement of worker's treatment, and re-instatement of recently laid-off workers. Since the strike did not meet the guidelines stipulated in the Labor Code, the Ministry of Labor declared the strike illegal and ordered the workers to return to work. The strikers reiterated their decision to continue with their action despite the declaration of the Ministry of Labor and received support from two large union

[280] "San Salvador has Bus Strike," *Washington Post*, January 20, 1967.

confederations, the General Association of University Students, AGEUS, and the Salvadoran Women Sorority (Fraternidad de Mujeres Salvadoreñas) and enjoyed broad popular support among the general population. On April 24 the leaders of the two largest union confederations agreed to start a general labor strike to press for a resolution of the steel plant workers. This general strike started two days later. Picket lines quickly blocked the entrances of bakeries, hotels, construction sites, sports centers, movie theatres, the public sanitation headquarters, and even the port of Cutuco located in the far eastern part of the country, disturbing the normal flow of economic activities of a significant part of the nation. A total of 35,000 union members participated in the strike with work stoppages in about 24 large businesses and in many smaller commercial establishments. The general strike lasted only three days as the owners of Acero S.A. decided to come to an agreement and grant the demands of the steel workers.[281]

The actions initiated by the steel workers had enormous impact in subsequent union as well as political activism. The fact that the strike had started in a plant not located in the capital city San Salvador but in the city of Zacatecoluca (58 miles from San Salvador), that had received massive support, and that had in turn sparked a larger, nation-wide general strike, demonstrated to the Salvadoran working classes the level of strength and the possibilities that unionization could accomplish.

The strike also showed how workers were not mere subjects of oligarchic and military oppression, but that the right to strike as guaranteed by the law provided workers the leverage they needed to actively shape their own lives. These successes established important precedents for the future of the nation. Finally, the impact of the strike should

[281] Salvador Cayetano Carpio, *La Huelga General Obrera de Abril. El Salvador* (San Salvador, ES: Editorial Farabundo Martí, 1981), 61-90.

also be measured by the reaction of the business owners; in the face of worker solidarity, owners decided to establish their own organization —the National Association of Private Enterprise (ANEP), which played a crucial role in national politics in the subsequent years as an influential representative of conservative sectors.

The last major strike of the decade was conducted in 1968 by the National Association of Salvadoran Educators, ANDES 21 *de junio*—the teachers' union. This organization started its activities on June 21, 1965, with a demonstration to protest reforms to the system of pensions which increased the number of years required to receive retirement benefits to forty. The demonstration ended with the promise of the President to work to waive this requirement for teachers.[282] The working conditions of teachers, however, did not improve. Even though they were government employees, they still were not part of the Social Security system and therefore did not qualify for health benefits and other government employee programs. On February 22, 1968, the teachers began their strike. Although the strike created significant challenges for parents because it shut down schools across the country, the teachers garnered broad support among the general public and by other union confederations. The teachers demanded access to work benefits granted to other public sector workers and the right to have their opinions taken into account by curriculum developers. The teachers opposed the government's project for educational television and the government's plans to promote technical education to create a skilled labor pool for the industrial sector. Opposition to the ITV program had at least two origins. First, many teachers resented that the television instructors diminished their own authority in the classroom. Second, they resented the stance of Minister

[282] "Historia," ANDES 21 de junio. Información Institucional, accessed September 2, 2020, https://www.andes21dejunio.com/historia.

Béneke, who often used his authority to take decisions without taking into account the opinions of teachers. The union's opposition to technical education was linked to the ideological radicalization that various sectors were experiencing at the time, and that was the result of the influence of the Cuban Revolution. They believed that the government was preparing a skilled-labor pool that would serve exclusively to further enrich the oligarchy and that would leave the workers in poverty. Plus, the plants for which the new skilled labor force would work were—at least in a significant number—of North American origin, and thus represented US imperialism. The strike lasted fifty-eight days during which there were many demonstrations of support from a variety of sectors throughout the country. As support grew the confederations began to promote work stoppages to show solidarity with the teachers and to threaten another general strike. The government as well as the economic elites feared that a second general strike would open the doors for events of that magnitude to become commonplace and affect the economic activities negatively, and thus decided to stop it by sending the security forces to dissolve it.

Although the teachers did not obtain their demands immediately after the strike, they eventually did so. In December of that same year the government began to pass measures attending to some of the demands that had been made by workers in all previous strikes. The first such measure was a decree approving insurance coverage for Disability, Age, and Death by the Social Security system. With this new measure, the workers—or their families—affiliated to the system would receive a pension in case of temporary or permanent disability due to work related illnesses or accidents, after turning

65 years of age, and in the case of work-related death.[283] In August 1969, the government finally passed the Teachers Law, which granted teachers the longed-sought right to retire after thirty years of work and the benefits offered by the Social Security system.[284]

The teacher's strike and the form in which the government decided to end it, particularly, were also significant for the future of national politics. Although there were neither fatalities nor excessive use of force reported, the abrupt use of security forces to end the demonstration led most teachers to withdraw support for the party of the military and to adopt a more combative, anti-government stance in the following years. Teachers, like many university students and Catholic priests, became active promoters for broader social change and articulate critics of the State.[285] Also, two years after the strike, in 1970, the leader of the Union, Mélida Anaya Montes joined labor union activist Salvador Cayetano Carpio to found the first guerrilla organization, the Popular Liberation Forces, FPL.

The union activism that took place in the last years of the 1960s in El Salvador brought significant improvements to the lives of workers. The struggle opened the eyes of many more people to the possibilities of organized labor and it set important foundations for the future role of unions in the political processes of the nation. The strikes also revealed that the small country, usually believed to be mired in poverty and military

[283] Poder Ejecutivo, Decreto No. 117, "Reglamento de Aplicación de los Seguros de Invalidez, Vejez y Muerte," *Diario Oficial,* 221, no. 240 (Diciembre 20, 1968): 13431, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1968/12-diciembre/diciembre-1968_Parte21.pdf.
[284] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 410, "Ley de la Profesión de Maestro," *Diario Oficial,* 224, no. 155 (Agosto 25, 1969): 8866, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1969/08-agosto/agosto-1969_Parte18.pdf.
[285] Before 1968 the teacher's association had mostly supported the party of the military. One of the leaders of the sector and founder of ANDES 21 de junio, Mélida Anaya Montes (later the historic Comandante Ana María, who died misteriously with Comandante Cayetano Carpio in 1981 in Nicaragua), maintained a love affair with President Rivera. It is believed that perhaps due to this relationship, during most of Rivera's tenure the teacher's association kept a cordial relationship with the official party, as Anaya Montes apparently provided advice to the president on education related matters. See Waldo Chávez Velasco, *Lo que no Conté Sobre los Presidentes Militares*, 46.

oppression during these years, was experiencing a wave of worker-led strikes and demands for political reforms similar to movements that were happening simultaneously in larger and more developed parts of the world.

In addition to the growth of labor unions and activities in the urban centers, the country also saw in this decade the emergence of rural workers organizations supported by the government as well as independent. In 1965, for example, the government of Rivera sought the assistance of the American Institute for Free Labour Development to help a small group of farmers to organize. The group, in turn, founded the Salvadoran Communal Union (Unión Comunal Salvadoreña UCS), an organization that aimed to improve the life conditions of peasants through various projects that included improved housing, roads, bridges, and schools.[286] Since the organization was guided/sponsored by the government its members were, consequently, supporters of the official party. However, given that peasant organizations were not allowed, the UCS never obtained legal status, and thus its reach was limited.

The independent rural workers organizations founded in this decade began to emerge around 1962-1963 under the influence and support of the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) and of the Catholic Church. The influence of the PDC came through its National Union of Christian Workers (Unión Nacional de Obreros Cristianos UNOC), whose message reached workers beyond urban centers. The support from the church came through the Cooperative Support Foundation, which was created by the archbishop of San Salvador Monseñor Chávez y Gonzáles with the goal of stimulating the formation of cooperatives among small farmers. The peasant cooperatives that were organized in

[286] Robert Armstrong and Janet Shenk, *El Salvador. The Face of Revolution* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1982),49-50.

those early years in rural areas around San Salvador (particularly around the municipality of Aguilares) came to form, in 1965, the Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants (Federación Crisitiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños, FECCAS), which became one of the first independent and eventually most important peasant organizations of the country. In its initial years FECCAS worked to strengthen communal organization among peasants. In the following decade, however, its focus would shift towards more active demands for land redistribution, better wages, and improved living conditions for the people in the countryside.[287]

Social Reforms: Public Health

In terms of public health in the 1960s, El Salvador also experienced reforms that improved the population's access to better nutrition, access to health services, and sanitation. Public health expenditures during this decade increased from $7.6 million in 1960 to $15.2 million in 1969—a one hundred percent increase.[288] This type of attention was reflected in a significant reduction in the rates of mortality and incidence of illnesses endemic to the region. The death rate in children under one year, for example, went down from 72.5 to 47.1 (per every 1000 live births) within the span of the decade, and in children one to four years of age, the rate decreased from 17.1 to 11.1 within the same

[287] In addition to Robert Armstrong and Janet Shenk, see Francisco Joel Arriola, "Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños (FECCAS) y Unión de Trabajadores del Campo (UTC): La Formación del Movimiento Campesino Salvadoreño Revisitada," *Diálogos, Revista de Historia de la Universidad de Costa Rica* 20, no.2 (2019):64-98.
[288] World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas," Table 5.3.

period.[289] Incidences of malaria, pneumonia, tuberculosis, and tetanus were also significantly reduced.

Better access to proper nourishment for the less privileged became a goal of the government after signing up to the Alliance for Progress in 1961. The Rivera administration took the initial step towards that objective with an unprecedented proposal: to work in establishing a "minimum diet" (or basic food basket) for rural workers. Since the economic powers with whom policy had to be negotiated (especially policy related to agricultural life) did not immediately welcome the initiative, the government worked towards the realization of those goals using different approaches. First, to help rural workers attain better nutrition, the government passed decrees aimed at improving their income so that they could buy more food on their own and, and at the same time join the emergent market economy. Second, it created an agency that had the goal of acquiring staple crops and of reselling these at stable and accessible prices to the population. Third, it worked to make foodstuffs that had essential nutrients accessible to low-income households. Finally, it initiated a program to provide a free meal for public primary school students.

The decrees to improve rural income stipulated a minimum wage of $0.90 per day for all agricultural and cattle farming workers, and the elimination of payment of wages in kind.[290] Before the measures were enacted, rural workers' wages varied from .20 to .40 cents per day, and most land owners paid part of the labor wages with meals that

---

[289] Paul Oswald Woolley, C.A. Perry, and D.L. Larson, *Syncrisis: The Dynamics of Health. An Analytic Series on the Interactions of Health and Socioeconomic Development. V: El Salvador* (Washington: U.S. Office of International Health, 1972), 25-28.

[290] Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión Social, Decreto No. 70, "Aprobación del Salario Mínimo para Trabajadores Agropecuarios," *Diario Oficial*, 207, no. 65 (Abril 2, 1965): 4129, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1965/04-abril/abril-1965_Parte2.pdf. Ninety cents in 1965 equals about $7.37 today.

consisted of beans, a pinch of salt, and corn tortillas.[291] In some instances, planters would also provide a basic room for temporary workers, which was also discounted from their wage. When payday arrived, workers often ended up receiving little cash, especially if they were indebted with the planter (a common predicament) and on top of the food discounts also had to pay their debt. Rural workers, thus, were in a situation that made them susceptible to exploitation and that, in most cases, did not allow them to meet adequate nutritional requirements for their households. The measures that established a minimum wage and eliminated payment in kind, then not only helped rural workers improve their income and ability to buy food, but also helped them to begin challenging the traditional paternalistic labor system that had made them dependent, even for their humble meals, on the will of landowners.

The second measure to improve the diet the rural working classes was to lower and stabilize the prices of staple crops. This goal was done by re-organizing the Provisions' Regulatory Institute (Instituto Regulador de Abastecimientos, IRA), which, since its creation in 1953, aimed at combating speculative practices in the staple foods markets. In the 1960s the agency received a boost of government support that helped to expand its personnel, grain-storage capacity, purchasing power, and ability to offer its products to more people. With the renewed support the agency worked on two goals: to foment the production of staple crops among small farmers by guaranteeing the purchase of their harvest at minimum and advantageous (for the farmers) prices, and to redistribute the purchased grain at prices accessible for the low-income population. The speculative practices of intermediaries were combated by opening IRA distributions centers where grains were sold directly to final consumers. While the original plan was to bring basic

[291] "El Salvador Economy Shifting," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 12, 1965.

food products to the economically vulnerable population, the IRA distribution centers were opened to the general public, and all social sectors were able to purchase grains at low prices. For the rural population though, the activities of this institution brought important improvements to their diet. For the first time, small and rural towns had a government-run "store" where, even with their limited wages, they could get corn, beans, rice, sorghum, sugar, and salt.

In addition to more accessible staple grains, the low-income population of El Salvador in the 1960s also saw the arrival of foodstuffs with added nutrients that had been produced specifically to address their dietary deficits. The first instance of such innovations came in 1961 with the passing of the Salt Iodization Law (Ley de Yodación de Sal), which ordered all salt producers to add iodine to salt.[292] The measure intended to address the problem of iodine deficiency, which was the cause of problems like endemic goiter and developmental disabilities. After this law the government sought to further address the problem of undernourishment with two products: powdered milk and a high-protein supplemental meal.

Powdered milk was distributed by the IRA, and since it was produced and packaged specifically for the agency, it was branded as IRA 26. This milk was one of the first important additions to the insufficient diet of the low-income population. Although it was often times dismissed as "charity milk" by the more privileged, for the working classes it was one of the most nutritious elements of their diet and the one that helped improve the health and even the chances of survival for their children. The other product was Incaparina. This was a vitamin-enriched, high-protein beverage specifically designed

[292] Directorio Civico Militar de El Salvador, Decreto No. 45, "Ley de Yodación de Sal," *Diario Oficial,* 190, no. 40 (Febrero 27, 1961): 1715, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1961/02-febrero/febrero-1961_Parte29.pdf.

to supplement deficient diets and prevent malnutrition. The product was developed in 1959 by two Guatemalan doctors at the Nutrition Institute for Central America and Panama, INCAP (a nutrition and food security organization created in 1949 with the support of the Rockefeller and Kellogg Foundations) and after it proved successful, it was distributed to other Central American nations. The beverage was produced with corn, cottonseed, sorghum, and calcium carbonate. It came in the form of powder with which consumers were to prepare the traditional hot beverage called "atole," and was offered at the average cost of three cents per day in order to make it accessible to those who most needed it.[293] The effectiveness of the product was such that it even became part of the popular culture. In subsequent decades, for example, working class people who were tall and stocky were often said to have been given Incaparina in their infancy. Since the product is still available (although malnutrition is not as widespread as in the 1960s) sometimes people recommend to "give at least Incaparina" to children who look undernourished.

The last step was the implementation of a program that provided a meal to students at public primary schools across the country. The meal, which was either breakfast or lunch, always included IRA 26 milk and some type of fruit. The food ingredients, kitchen and table needs were provided by the government, and the preparation and serving was handled by volunteer parents. According to a 1966 government publication, the program's aim was to benefit around 350,000 children in public schools across the nation.[294]

---

[293] Robert S. Smith, "Population and Economic Growth in Central America," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 10, no. 2 (1962): 139.
[294] *Aquí El Salvador. Síntesis de un Pueblo en Constante Progreso* (San Salvador, ES: Departamento de Relaciones Públicas. Casa Presidencial, 1966), 146.

Although nowadays the previously described nutrition improvement measures are either not mentioned in studies about the country or are straightforwardly dismissed as ineffective and politically charged actions, at the time they happened they did have a significant impact in the life of the working classes. Just the iodization of salt, for example, was an elemental public health food fortification measure that helped to eliminate many preventable developmental disorders. Even though it is a low-cost measure with known positive effects, salt iodization is still not yet a given in many countries of the world nowadays. In El Salvador, it was implemented in 1961—a time during which measures like this are deemed inconceivable—with the sole purpose of improving the health of poor Salvadorans, the majority of the population. The concept of "the right to a basic food basket," also, was first heard of by many rural and other low-income workers around these years and started to become a reality only after the passing of the minimum income law, the creation of IRA, and the introduction of nutrient-enriched supplements. These nutritional measures marked a before and an after in the lives of thousands of working-class Salvadorans. They marked one of their first steps towards ending a paternalistic system that had made them completely dependent on landowners and they also provided poor people with access to basic nutrition that improved their physical and mental development and decreased childhood mortality.

In terms of access to medical services, the government continued the reforms initiated in the previous decade by building more health centers and expanding more aggressive sanitation and vaccination campaigns. One of the landmark achievements of this decade was the 1969 inauguration of the Social Security Hospital, which had a total of 400 beds and was said to be one of the most modern health centers in Central America.

Before this hospital was opened, however, the Social Security system had expanded its health services by opening clinics outside the capital city San Salvador in places like the port town of Acajutla, in the western city of Sonsonate, the norther town of Guazapa, and the central towns of Quezaltepeque, Nejapa, and Aguilares—all to address the health needs of the workers (and their families) that had become affiliated to the system.

For the people who were not part of the Social Security system, the government also expanded the number of public health facilities throughout the country. Basic health stations, for example, increased from 74 to 95, and hospitals from 18 to 23 over the decade. In total, by 1970, there were 182 public health facilities, which covered 145 of the 261 municipalities that the country had at the time. The total number of available hospital beds, therefore, went from 5211 to 7003 in the same period. The pool of health professionals also increased considerably. The number of physicians, for example, increased from 516 to 726; dentists increased from 53 to 246; and certified nurses from 350 to 783.[295]

With the financial help of the AID Program, the country also continued its efforts to combat malaria and also expanded public family planning services. Malaria eradication was a three-year project that began in 1966 and was supported by a $2.6 million AID-backed loan. The goal was to reduce the number of human carriers of the disease through an intensive campaign of collective drug treatment and the continuation of spraying of DDT in pertinent areas to prevent transmission.[296] Family planning services were also expanded in 1968 with the help of an AID grant of $328,000 that was given to the

[295] Paul Oswald Woolley et al., *Syncrisis*, 32, and *Segundo Informe Sobre la Situación Sanitaria Mundial 1957-1960* (Ginebra: Organización Mundial de la Salud, 1963): 123-124, http://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/94750.
[296] *Report on the Health, Population, and Nutrition Activities of the Agency for International Development* (Washington, DC: U.S. Office of International Health, 1968): 213.

Salvadoran Demographic Society to assist in the operations of twenty five clinics that had been established throughout the country and with the training of family planning personnel at the Ministry of Health and the Social Security system.[297] Since the government recognized that birth control was the only practical measure to try to alleviate the problem of overpopulation, it gave its full support to the family planning efforts and, by 1971, there were a total of 133 family planning clinics distributed throughout the country.[298]

Social Reforms: Housing

Housing was also a social sector that saw significant improvements. Although the main efforts to provide adequate housing options to the low-income population continued to be led by the government, the private sector began to participate in the construction of affordable housing by facilitating, for the first time in the history of the country, mortgage loans to common Salvadorans workers. One of the first steps that were taken to expand the accessibility of housing was the re-organization of the Urban Housing Institute. From 1960 onwards, the new goal of the Institute became to focus on the construction of low-cost housing in order to benefit a larger number of families. Work towards this goal was supported with the help of the United States Agency for International Development and of the Inter-American Development Bank. Between 1961 and 1965 the Social Progress Fund of the latter institution provided the Institute with two large loans that totaled twelve million dollars which, added to the local contribution of ten million dollars, were to serve for the construction of nearly ten thousand low-cost

[297] Ibid, 215.
[298] Paul Oswald Woolley et al., *Syncrisis,* 4.

housing units.[299] In order to ensure accessibility of the working classes to the finished projects, the loan contracts stipulated that new units were to be sold, not rented, to the occupants, that only those who had monthly incomes between $48 and $148 per month would qualify to obtain a unit, and that a percentage of the projected units were to be constructed under a "self-help" program, which allowed future qualifying occupants to contribute with their labor in the construction of the unit in order to lower ten to fifteen percent of the final costs.[300]

In addition to the public housing construction projects directly carried out by the Urban Housing Institute, the country also saw in this decade the emergence of a new entity that provided further accessibility to housing. Created in 1963, the National Home Financing Agency served as a mortgage bank that facilitated both construction and mortgage loans to three Savings and Loans Associations that were formed by local investors.[301] The Saving and Loans system became, after the Urban Housing Institute, the second most important entity that provided accessible mortgage loans to the general population. Both of these entities offered newly constructed housing units through mortgage terms that were novel in the country: ten percent down payments, interest rates that ranged from six to nine percent, twenty years terms, and monthly payments of as low as ten dollars.

---

[299] Inter-American Development Bank, *Social Progress Trust Fund Second Annual Report, 1962* (Washington, D.C: Inter-American Development Bank, 1963), 30, and Inter-American Development Bank, *Social Progress Trust Fund Fifth Annual Report, 1965* (Washington, D.C: Inter-American Development Bank, 1966), 38.

[300] Inter-American Development Bank, *Activities, 1961-1968* (Washington, D.C: Inter-American Development Bank, 1969), 56.

[301] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 282, "Ley de la Financiera Nacional de la Vivienda y de las Asociaciones de Ahorro y Prestamo," *Diario Oficial*, 198, no. 52 (Marzo 15, 1963): 2706, https://www.diariooficial.gob.sv/diarios/do-1963/03-marzo/marzo-1963_Parte12.pdf.

Thanks to the work that the Urban Housing Institute and the Savings and Loans System carried out, San Salvador and the other two large urban centers of the country, San Miguel and Santa Ana, saw the emergence of new residential neighborhoods or *colonias* that are recognized today as middle class. Some of these neighborhoods include the Colonia José Simeón Cañas (the largest colonia built for government employees and industrial workers, and more popularly known as Colonia Zacamil), the Colonia IVU, the Colonia Santa Lucía, Colonia Moserratt, Colonia Vista Hermosa, Colonia Universitaria, La Sultana, Las Rosas, and many others. In total, the Urban Housing institute built 13,067 housing units from 1960 to 1970, and the Savings and Loans System built 1,871 units and facilitated over two thousand mortgage loans for people to purchase a home financed within and outside the Savings and Loans System.[302] In addition to the work by these two large entities there were also housing projects undertaken by the Housing Investment Guarantee Program of the Alliance for Progress. The goal of this program was to demonstrate advanced techniques of construction, marketing, financing, and housing management to Latin American nations. This program built in 1964 the well-known Colonias Miramonte and Jardines de Guadalupe, which contained a total of eleven hundred units which, as intended, served as models for other projects.

All of the housing projects built during this decade (as well as those built in the 1950s) introduced to the large urban centers of the country, especially to the capital city, new spatial forms that are often associated with the residential areas of a modern and industrial metropolis. The *colonias* were fully planned settlements that abandoned the traditional mixed commercial-residential patterns as they were strictly residential in nature. They were erected guided by a building code that established minimum

[302] World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas," Table 8.19, and Gary David Schill, "A Place to Live," Table 8.

requirements for rooms, windows, patios, ceiling heights, front lawns, electrical and sanitary services. They were also built with novel construction materials (cement, brick and steel, instead of adobe and wood), adopted new styles of land division and usage (common walls with neighbors, front lawns), and, like wealthier housing, had complete urban services, sidewalks, paved streets, public lightning, garbage collection, payphones, sports and other recreational areas, outdoor public art, schools, markets, and telegraph offices.[303] The most novel feature of the new housing projects was, perhaps, the front lawn, a cultural innovation imported from the United States which was found in many of these projects (fig. 3.2).

In addition to changing the spatial appearance of the city, the projects of the Urban Housing Institute and the Savings and Loans System revealed an important social phenomenon: the expansion of the middle income sectors.[304] This trend of upward mobility started in the 1950s when the first housing projects carried out by the government provided adequate housing to a variety of government and industrial workers who, due to monopoly of real state tenure by the elites and the lack of accessible mortgage loans, lived in rented and often inadequate units. The increase in home ownership trend by the middle income sectors continued in the 1960s after the Urban Housing Institute changed its goals and decided to focus on the construction of low-cost housing in order to build more units and benefit the growing numbers of government and industrial workers.

[303] Gary David Schill, "A Place to Live," 100, and Andrea Alejandra Barahona, "La Vivienda Social en El Salvador 1940-1980," *Revista Realidad* 150 (2017): 71-87.

[304] The middle sectors that expanded during these years were mainly composed of government and industrial employees, teachers, and small business owners. Just in terms of public employees, the staff of the government's administrative apparatus went from 36, 239 in 1958 to 62,457 in 1968. See Italo López Vallecillos, "Fuerzas Sociales y Cambio Social en El Salvador," *ECA* 369-370 (1979): 562.

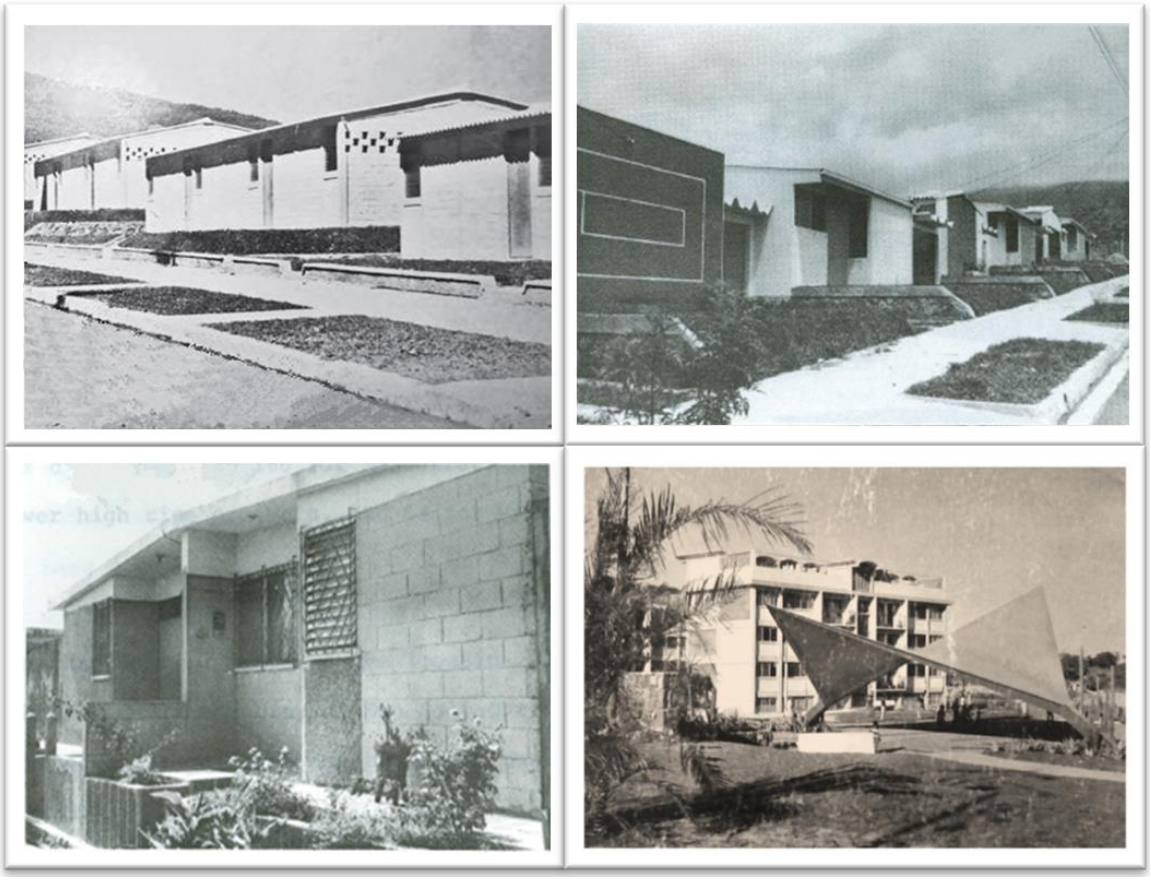


Figure 3.2. Housing dwellings of the new colonias built in the 1960s in San Salvador. Upper left: single family low-cost units built by the Urban Housing Institute. Upper right: single family units built by the Savings and Loans System. Lower left and lower right: low-cost, self-help single-family unit and multi-family apartment units built by the UHI. Sources: Gary David Schill, "A Place to Live: Middle Class Housing in San Salvador, El Salvador" (PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1973), 114 & 122., and Andrea Alejandra Barahona, "La Vivienda Social en El Salvador 1940-1980," *Revista Realidad* 150 (2017): 80-81.

The new projects allowed many people to move from the *mesones* or other rented properties into housing units that were modern in style, had all the necessary services for a better life, and more importantly, were homes owned not rented by the occupants. The government-led public housing projects bolstered the process of upward residential mobility of the working classes, and home ownership, along with other social reforms

(such as increased job security, better wages, more access to healthcare and education), became one of the most important factors that helped the low income working classes to join and expand the country's middle sectors.

Social Reforms: Education

In the 1960s the country experienced ground-breaking education projects and reforms that caused great impact on the Salvadoran society of the time and of subsequent years. There were four major educational accomplishments/changes during this decade. They were: 1) the academic, pedagogical, administrative, and ideological reforms that took place at the National University after the arrival of Dr. Fabio Castillo Figueroa as President in 1963; 2) the opening of the first private university in the country (the Central American University, UCA) in 1965; 3) the Education Reform of 1968 that overhauled primary and secondary education; and 4) the introduction of an Instructional Television Program that aimed to support the work of the primary and secondary teachers.

The first significant education changes of the 1960s happened at the higher level and revealed the effect of having opened the university's doors to students of the lower social strata in the previous decade. As a result of the Student Welfare Program through which students paid fees based on their income, the student body grew from 1,199 in 1950 to 2,200 in 1960 and to 3,200 in 1963. The resulting change in demographics had a direct impact on the type of leadership that would be elected to guide the institution. In 1963, the growing number of left-leaning students and faculty were able to elect a

University President that proved to be an active reformist, Dr. Fabio Castillo Figueroa, who was always regarded as a communist by the conservative sectors.[305]

Dr. Castillo Figueroa pushed for an intensive program of reforms intended to modernize the university and incorporate it as an active instrument for national development. To achieve that goal, he supported (among many other reforms) the recruitment of more full-time faculty, the diversification of degrees offered, cooperation and exchanges with other universities of the world, the creation of two regional branches of the university, the extension of scholarships to postgraduate studies abroad, the adoption of the units/credits system, and the introduction of a General Studies program for the first two years of university education.

The introduction of required general education courses, particularly, did not seat well with the conservative sectors since, in addition to the already uncomfortable presence of lower-class students, the new reform forced them to share the same classroom with them and, for the first time, to take subjects not directly related to their discipline. The situation generated friction that escalated into an historic event that highlights the impact of the changes that were happening in the higher education sphere and in the country's political life. The event was an attempt at secession carried by the School of Engineering and Architecture, which appeared to be the hotbed of conservatism in the university during those times.

Using as an excuse an agreement of cooperation that Dr. Castillo Figueroa had signed with the Lomonosov University (nowadays Moscow State University), on November 19, 1964, the Board of Directors of the School of Engineering and Architecture decided to secede from the University. They declared the School an

[305] Carlos E. Martínez, "Historia de la Facultad de Ingeniería," 154.

independent entity and, along with a group of supporting students, seized the School's administration building. Since the attempts of the University's Superior Council to resolve the problem were not heard by the secessionist group, the University's General Assembly voted to officially remove the Deans and professors that formed the separatist Board of Directors. After learning of the decision, the separatist group attempted to continue their endeavor by force, which developed in a gunfire exchange with some students. Dr. Castillo Figueroa and other deans ultimately resorted to the State's security apparatuses to resolve the issue, which was settled after the National Guard showed up and enforced the decisions of the University's officials by escorting the separatists outside campus.[306]

This event shows significant aspects of the socio-political life of the country in the 1960s that are generally understudied. First it shows the ground-breaking changes that were happening in the National University after the reforms that began in 1950 and that became more aggressive after the arrival of Dr. Castillo Figueroa as President. Higher education in El Salvador was no longer the privilege of the elite, but was accessible even to the low income working classes. Also, for the first time, the leadership of the institution was in the hands of left-leaning professors and students who were attempting to make the University an instrument of change for the nation. Second, the event shows a unique and mostly overlooked situation in the political life of the country: the support provided by the State—a military/conservative State—to the liberal/left-leaning university officials and students. The fact that the government's security forces cooperated to assert and enforce the decisions of the University's General Assembly to

[306] Carlos E. Martínez, "Historia de la Facultad de Ingeniería," 153-155.

remove the secessionist elements from their posts and from campus shows that the government was truly attempting to avoid the mistakes made by President Lemus in 1960 (the violent invasion of the university and the mistreatment of students and faculty as a response to anti-government demonstrations), that it was willing to protect the autonomy of the university (even if the leadership of the institution had a differing political ideology) and that it even had the disposition to defy the conservative sectors by supporting changes that went against their wishes and interests. This stance adopted by the State led to something unthinkable in present day narratives: President Rivera Carballo (as well as Oscar Osorio) being accused by some of his colleagues of being a communist conspirator.[307]

After the confrontation was settled, the reforms of Dr. Castillo Figueroa continued reshaping the University. By the end of the decade, for example, the number of degrees offered had increased from to 21 to 34, the student body had expanded to 10,000, the program for general education studies was fully implemented, and two branches of the university were opened, one in the western city of Santa Ana, and one in eastern San Miguel. [308] The increase in the number of college students was very significant for the country. The fact that many of the new students came from the lower classes led to further demands to correct the historic underserving of those sectors and to a rise in expectations of the students for the government to fulfill its role of facilitator of the socioeconomic wellbeing of all citizens. When the government began to revert to its old

[307] See José René Barón Ferrufino, *Penetración Comunista en El Salvador y veinte años de tración* (San Salvador, ES: Editorial Ahora, 1970), 65-101.
[308] Mario Flores Macal, "Historia de la Universidad de El Salvador," *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos* 2, no. 1 (1976): 132-133, https://www.jstor.org/stable/25661573, and World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas," Table 10.5.

role of keeper or order in the late 1970s, students posed tremendous pressure/opposition to that change through protests and with the establishment of guerrilla organizations.

The reforms—and the resistance posed to them by the conservative sectors—had significant implications for the country. The failed attempt at secession made the conservative sectors realize that the National University was no longer governed by the will of the economically powerful and led them to the idea of creating a new university that not only would keep the social classes apart but that would function in accord to the expectations of the upper classes. That idea quickly materialized on September 1965, with the opening of the first private university of the country, the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas, UCA—a Catholic college administered by the Society of Jesus. The new school began its activities with 357 students enrolled in three degree programs: Engineering, Economics, and Business Administration.[309] By 1970 it had added degrees in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature, and enrollment had increased to 1,321.[310] The quality of education offered by the UCA was, since its opening, regarded as either equal or superior to that of the National University.

The founding of the UCA had tremendous significance for El Salvador. In addition to its natural contributions to the higher education sphere, the new institution eventually came to play a role of great importance in the nation's politics as it, ironically, became an aggressive critic of the conservative sectors and a disseminator of revolutionary ideals among the better-off Salvadoran youth. This radical turn happened around the mid-1970s, as the Society of Jesus adhered to and began to actively practice Liberation Theology, a movement developed by the Latin American Church since the

[309] "Historia," UCA, accessed September 10, 2020, http://uca.edu.sv/historia/fundacion.
[310] World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas," Table 10.5.

late-1960s that emphasized work for the well-being of the poor and the liberation of oppressed peoples. Realizing injustices were taking place within the political turmoil of the 1970s, the UCA quickly distanced itself from the sectors that had promoted its creation and, through its publishing house, UCA Editores, became a powerful sounding board for the country's social conflicts. Twenty-four years after its foundation, when the country was in the throes of its civil war, the criticism that came out of that institution had become so powerful that it ended up costing the lives of six of its professors (among them, three of the most prolific writers, Ignacio Ellacuría, Ignacio Martín Baró, and Segundo Montes), who were assassinated by a National Army's squad the night of November 16, 1989.

After the UCA shifted its intended course around the mid-1970s, higher education in the country also experienced surprising changes. The discontented conservative sectors founded, in 1977, another private university, the Universidad Matias Delgado, which specialized in the preparation of lawyers.[311] The founding of a third university opened the doors for a startling proliferation of private colleges (by the end of the 1980s there were thirty-five private colleges throughout the country) that followed a variety of socio-political positions and that reflected the polarization that Salvadoran society had begun to experience since the latter half of the 1970s.[312]

Like the higher education reforms, the changes that took place at the primary and secondary education levels during the 1960s were far-reaching. The annual budget assigned by the government to public education, for example, increased gradually from

[311] See Luis Escalante Arce, *Sacrificios Humanos Contra Derechos Humanos. Relato del Secuestro de un Banquero Salvadoreño,* (San Salvador, ES: Edilit, 1991).
[312] Amaral Palevi Gómez Arévalo, "Una Genealogía de la Educación en El Salvador," *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos* 41, no.3-4 (2011): 104.

$13,181,364 (eighteen percent of the national budget) in 1960 to $25,408,703 (twenty five percent of the national budget) by 1968. [313] This kind of investment helped to expand public education on a greater scale than in the previous decade when the reforms that supported education began. The total number of primary school students, for example, increased from 350,874 in 1960 to 534,469 by 1968, and the number of teachers from 9,647 to 15,863 in the same period.[314]

The major development of the decade, however, happened in 1968 when the government implemented a comprehensive reform program that encompassed all pre-university levels. In the same manner that Dr. Fabio Castillo had been instrumental for the reforms at the UES, the re-structuring of the pre-university system was also made under the direction of a dynamic leader whose name became ingrained to the 1968 reforms: Walter Béneke Medina—an award-winning playwright and diplomatic representative who headed the Ministry of Education from 1967 to 1971.[315] Béneke, an Economist and Political Scientist, was convinced that the country's education system had stagnated and that it was urgent to make changes directed to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the population. Since he had a strong personal appreciation for the value of general education and culture, he promoted the inclusion of these elements in the reform projects.

The overall goal of the 1968 reform was to support the ongoing socio-economic transformations with the creation of a pool of workers who had received both the

[313] UNESCO, *International Yearbook of Education 22* (Paris, FR: UNESCO, 1961), 152, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000132937.locale=en, and UNESCO, *International Yearbook of Education 30* (Paris, FR: UNESCO, 1969), 154, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000132957.locale=en.
[314] World Bank, "Situación y Perspectivas," Table 10.2.
[315] The 1968 Education Reform is often referred simply as the "Béneke Reform."

necessary training to be efficient in their particular occupations and the basic general education knowledge that would guide their choices at the workplace and at home. In its initial five-year stage (1968-1973), the project modified the general approach to education, made major changes to the curriculum, expanded the number of years of basic/ compulsory education, diversified the secondary levels, reorganized the teacher training system, expanded the number of schools and teachers serving the rural areas, created sports and cultural centers for students, and introduced an Instructional Television Program.[316]

All those changes and innovations were possible thanks to the assistance of various international organizations. UNESCO, for example, helped with the general planning and implementation of the reforms, the Alliance for Progress (through its Regional Office for Central America and Panama, ROCAP) designed and provided textbooks and teachers' guides in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Social Studies and Sciences, UNICEF donated books on teaching methods and curriculum improvement, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development provided loans for the construction of more schools, the government of Japan helped to plan and implement a Physical Education and Sports program, and USAID helped to introduce the technology factor by supporting the development of the Instructional Television program that intended to supplement the work of the teachers. At the local level, the Minister of Education created a team of highly educated and capable professionals who shared his vision and helped to carry out the goals of the reform project. Some of the most memorable team members include Manuel Luis Escamilla, Roberto Murray Meza, Carlos

[316] UNESCO, "Education for Progress: El Salvador," EFM/49, UNESCO Programme and Meeting Document, (1972), 5. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000001940.locale=en.

de Sola, and Irma Lanzas, who played important roles in the general planning of the reform projects, the development of Student Sports Centers, Cultural Centers, and Instructional Television, respectively.

The first major modification that the reformers wanted to implement was on the traditional approach that until then had been governing education. Basic and compulsory education was formed by grades one through six. During this stage students attended school for about seven hours per day, were taught a wide range of subjects that could or could not be useful for their lives and, as a rule, were expected to memorize their lessons. Also, the school and the teacher were conceived as the only entities responsible for the education of children.

This approach was completely revamped by the reform. Basic and compulsory education was expanded by adding three more years (making it grades one through nine), school hours were reduced to five, the curriculum was simplified from eleven to four basic subjects (Reading and Writing, Math, Social Science, and Natural Sciences), and students, for the first time, were encouraged to observe and to reason instead of attaining their knowledge through mere mechanical memorization. The responsibility of education, also, was extended to society as a whole—children were to be educated by their families, by the community, and by the school.[317]

The restructuring of the basic levels of education had life changing impact for thousands of young Salvadorans. Before the reform, the low-income youth who had the fortune to have a school nearby were accustomed and expected to think of sixth grade as the end of their education. Grades seven through nine were not part of the compulsory

[317] Bruno E. M. Stiglitz, "El Salvador. Reforma Educativa," 2920/RMO.RD/ESM/IM/AT/ELSALED 11, UNESCO Programme and Meeting Document, (1973), 2, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000005353.locale=en.

education system and required tuition fees that not everyone could afford. The extension of basic education until ninth grade eliminated tuition requirements, opening the door for many more students registering in those levels. Just in the first five years of the reform, for example, enrollment in those grades increased from 19,104 to 65,390 students (a 242% increase).[318] As with the National University, this new accessibility to education changed the demographics of basic education as, for the first time, more students from poor and rural areas were able to receive education beyond sixth grade.

Secondary education also received major re-structuring. Until 1968, this level was composed of five rigid programs that varied in length: Normal School (two years), Bookkeeping (three years), Secretarial (two years), Industry (three years), and Sciences and Literature (two years). That system had two major inconveniences. First, it did not permit students to change their orientation once they had started a program. Whoever had a change of heart had to start the new program from the beginning and would waste valuable time and money. Second, the first four vocational options were terminal: students could not opt to continue at the university level as those programs were designed exclusively for entering the labor market upon completion.

To remedy those limitations, the reform established a new structure that came to be known as "Bachillerato Diversificado" (Diversified High School). The new system established three years for all secondary level studies, implemented a general education curriculum that was to be gradually phased in over the course of those three years, and introduced a total of eleven specializations—eight of them job-oriented—that were

[318] John K. Mayo, Robert C. Hornik and Emile G. McAnany, *Educational Reform with Television. The El Salvador Experience*, (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976), 42.

offered in five different programs.[319] Under this system students had the flexibility to move horizontally (during the first two years) among the different programs and specialties if they had a change of heart without having to start a new program all over. Also, the system offered for all programs the double possibility of either entering the labor market or continuing into higher education. For those who had their mind set on employment, the new system equipped them with enough capacities to fill either the skilled-labor or the middle and lower management positions that were on the rise after the diversification of the economy. College-bound students, in turn, had now the flexibility to choose the traditional Academic Program or any other they were interested in since all programs (by virtue of having the same set of general education courses) now granted the right to opt for university studies. The diversification of secondary education was expanded in the 1970s to a total of ten programs and twenty-six specializations that aimed for a greater modernization of the labor force.

In terms of teacher training, the reform founded the Alberto Masferrer Normal City, a new school whose objective was to unify and modernize the country's teaching system and personnel. As part of the plan, by 1970 all government and private normal schools of the country were closed, and its students were transferred to the Normal City. The new school assumed the responsibilities of training new teachers according to the needs established by the reform and of re-training pre-reform teachers through courses and seminars designed to develop and update their skills.[320] The Normal City functioned

[319] Organization of the Bachillerato Diversificado in the first Five-Year Plan (1968-1973): Program 1: Academics (the traditionally college-bound program). *Specialties:* Physics and Mathematics, Biology and Chemistry, Humanities. Program 2: Pedagogy. *Specialty:* Teacher Training. Program 3: Commerce and Administration. *Specialties:* Accounting, Secretarial. Program 4: Industry. *Specialties:* General Mechanics, Electricity, Electronics, Automotive. Program 5: Agriculture. *Specialty:* Agriculture. See UNESCO, "Education for Progress," Annex III.
[320] Bruno E. M. Stiglitz, "El Salvador. Reforma Educativa," 8-9.

from 1968 until 1980, when teacher training was absorbed by the National University and other emerging private colleges. During its twelve years of existence, however, it was an object of national pride for many people who thought of it as one of the main institutions that were pushing for the modernization of El Salvador.

The centralization of teacher training brought great organization to the country's education system as it helped to control the supply of qualified teaching professionals in the re-structured levels and new specialties. Improved organization in turn helped the reformers prepare the necessary teachers for another phase of the development project: the expansion of secondary education, particularly in the rural areas, and the creation of sites and programs for after-school activities. Work towards this objective was initiated with the support of loans from USAID and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development that amounted to $17.1 million and that served for the construction of seventeen new, and the modernization of thirteen existing, secondary institutions by 1973.[321] In addition to the construction of more secondary schools the country also saw the birth during this period of the reform of two kinds of government-sponsored sites and programs that became central for student socialization and development of general education: the Circulos Estudiantiles and the Casas de la Cultura. The Circulos Estudiantiles were recreation and sports facilities for students to spend their after-school hours, to hold sports competitions, celebrations, music festivals, or other school related events. The Casas de la Cultura were community centers that, primarily, provided students with a physical space and didactic materials to complete their homework. In addition to school texts, however, they also had a collection of world literature through

[321] World Bank, "Appraisal of a Second Education Project El Salvador," (Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1974),10, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/958911468027839134/El-Salvador-Second-Education-Project.

which they promoted the habit of reading among students and the general public. The centers also offered extra-curricular courses, poetry contests, book fairs, and projects for the recovery and preservation of local cultural heritage.

The Casas de la Cultura became valuable elements of the reform as they offered young people the opportunity to develop their general education perspectives outside the classroom and to start using their skills in community-related activities. The access to world literature that many working-class youth had for the first time thanks to these centers also served for the further development of their critical thinking skills, world views and, eventually, of greater political consciousness.

The last major component of the education reform projects initiated in 1968 was the implementation of an instructional television program. This project was originally envisioned by Walter Béneke around 1961 when he was Ambassador to Japan. While in that country he was impressed with the achievements of the Nippon Hoso Kyokai, Japan's own Educational TV Program and thought of using a similar system to improve education in El Salvador. At the request of Béneke, the NHK conducted a feasibility study in El Salvador which concluded that the country possessed the necessary conditions for a television network. Béneke took the idea to the Ministry of Education and, in 1963 the government created the first Educational Television Commission to begin evaluating the project. Concrete work, however, did not begin until 1966 when Béneke returned from his ambassadorship in Japan and became chair of the commission. As he was appointed Minister of Education, he recruited Dr. Irma Lanzas to head the ITV project. Lanzas was by then a recognized educator and writer who had received training on educational television while conducting graduate studies in Europe. Her understanding

about the educational needs of the country as well as her expert knowledge acquired abroad provided ample expertise for the project to meet its expected outcomes in the first five years of the reform and set the bases for further expansion during 1970s.

Under the new leadership the project progressed at a fast pace. Studies were conducted about the possible applications of the program, how and where to introduce it, and how to pay for it. Three basic conclusion were reached: first, that the country at that moment could only afford a limited start-up program that would set the basis for future expansion; second, that the sector that would benefit the most from such a project was the recently restructured "third cycle" (grades seven through nine) since it would supplement the work of many teachers who had not been re-trained to teach at those levels; and third, that this complex and expensive project required technical and financial assistance from international organizations like UNESCO and the World Bank.

The plans experienced a fortunate turn in 1967 when President Fidel Sánchez Hernández attended a presidential summit at Punta del Este, Uruguay, and heard US President Lyndon B. Johnson propose to sponsor a pilot instructional television program in Latin America.[322] Sánchez Hernández took advantage of the opportunity and upon his return to El Salvador pushed for the Educational Television Commission to present their project to USAID. After conducting another feasibility study with their own experts, USAID responded favorably to the Salvadoran request and agreed to assist with the start-up costs—which amounted to $653,000—and to provide a loan of $1.9 million for the

[322] Johnson had become impressed himself with instructional television when he visited American Samoa in 1966 and saw the improvements in education the island had reached using that system.

purchase of transmission equipment and of TV receivers.[323] The Salvadoran government, in turn, committed to provide a building for production (located at the new Normal School), and the system's operating budget. Although foreign technical and financial assistance played an important role in the materialization of the project, the government of El Salvador paid outright for over fifty percent of total costs incurred between 1966 thru 1973. In addition, the government also assumed the responsibility of thirty percent of the costs that were financed by foreign loans.[324]

Production of videotaped lessons for seventh grade started in September 1968 and the actual broadcasting of these began in February 1969, although through a commercial station. By 1973, however, the ITV Program was regularly broadcasting for all three intended grades and through its own two channels (8 and 10).[325] The signal reached the entire national territory through five radiating towers: the central station located in the San Salvador volcano, two repeaters in the west and two more in the eastern regions of the country.

Students received about five hours of televised instruction per week. A typical lesson consisted of ten minutes of preparation by the classroom teacher, twenty minutes with a tele-teacher, and twenty minutes of follow up activities and practices guided by the classroom teacher. The lessons covered mathematics, social studies, science, Spanish, and English. They intended to support the work of the classroom teacher by covering areas/subjects of study believed to require higher expertise, and served as valuable

---

[323] Robert C. Hornik et al., *Television and Educational Reform in El Savlador,* (Stanford, CA: Institute for Communication Research, Stanford University, on behalf of the Academy for Educational Development, under contract with the U.S. Agency for International Development, 1973),15.
[324] Also, one fifth of the costs were financed by foreign grants and donations. See Wilbur Schramm, *Instructional Television in the Educational Reform of El Salvador,* (Washington, DC: Information Center on Instructional Technology, Academy for Educational Development, 1973), 37.
[325] Wilbur Schramm, *Instructional Television,* 25-30.

reinforcements to the regular lessons.[326] The televised program was supported by teacher guides and student textbooks and workbooks that were designed by dedicated teams in coordination with the TV producers. The quality of these printed materials has been regarded as outstanding and as some of the best textbooks ever made in the country.[327]

The ITV Program offered visible proof about the quality of the 1968 Educational Reform and, as it expanded in the 1970s, became an object of pride for the nation. From an instructional perspective, the televised lessons helped to upgrade classroom teaching by providing up-to-date/expert information on subjects for which the classroom teachers could provide only the basics (e.g. English, Sciences, Music,). From a more general standpoint, ITV helped to reach one of the foundational goals of the reform: the student's acquisition of general culture and critical thinking skills. This happened as the televised lessons radically disrupted the traditional classroom settings and teaching methods. Dictation by the teachers and passive notetaking and memorization by the students gave way to new forms of interaction; the unchallenged authority of the classroom teacher, for the first time, could be questioned by new information delivered from outside the classroom. That situation offered students a real-life example of how long-established beliefs or institutions could be challenged when new information about them has been gathered. Instructional Television, among other reforms, thus, played an important role in the transformation of the Salvadoran youth from docile "human archives" (a term Béneke often employed to criticize the emphasis on memorization of the pre-reform educational system) into informed citizens capable of questioning the origins of their circumstances—a fact attested by the course that the youth who were educated after the

[326] Wilbur Schramm et al., *Educational Television in El Salvador*, (Washington, DC: Agency for International Development, 1970), 4.
[327] Waldo Chávez Velasco, *Lo que no Conté*, 99-100.

reform took at the end of the 1970s: their critical thinking abilities led them to question and challenge the government first through protests and, eventually, through organized armed conflict.

After 1973 the program continued expanding and by the end of the decade it was also broadcasting lessons for grades four through six. In addition to the regular lessons, it also began to produce educational programs for general audiences that included manual arts, local history, plastic arts, news, and school sports. In the 1980s the program stalled as a result of the complex circumstances brought by the armed conflict.[328] Nevertheless, both channels continued broadcasting the material for general audiences that they had recorded in the past and other educational programs sent from outside. After 1990 the program was fully restructured into a single (Channel 10) public broadcasting station named Television Cultural Educativa (Cultural and Educational Television). Its new main goal became to help rescue and promote national cultural expressions. Although distant from its original purpose, the ITV program still survives to this day providing a significant service to the Salvadoran people. What's more, its prospects for a future role appear bright. Channel 10 was the first station in the country to transition from analog to a digital signal in 2018.

Cultural Change

By the end of the 1960s El Salvador had already experienced twenty years of government-led reform projects that had caused important transformations in the political, economic and social realms. The changes in these areas led to the gradual

[328] In 1989, for example, Channel 8 suffered a significant loss of signal that was never repaired and eventually forced the channel to close.

formation of new cultural values and expressions that reflected foreign influence, but became common among all social classes. The transference of cultural elements stemmed, for the most part, from the United States, and was the result of the political and economic relations that the government of El Salvador established with the U.S. since the Revolution of 1948. In the decade of the 1960s, however, the transference had reached even the low-income social classes and became noticeable in popular culture, especially in music. Although acculturation processes like this are often regarded as undesirable phenomena, in this study I have found that the proximity of American culture supported the overall reforms that were taking place at the time, providing Salvadorans—especially the youth—new perspectives that influenced their life expectations and the actions they took to fulfill them.

In the 1960s El Salvador was fertile ground for sowing foreign cultural seeds. Local identity was not very strong. On the contrary, the cultural elements that could have established a Salvadoran national identity had become stigmatized since 1932 when the *Pipil* indigenous population attempted an uprising that resulted in ethnocide and rejection of their culture. In the absence of common cultural references for the majority of the population, the country was open to receive and adopt foreign elements, especially those deemed as modern.[329]

[329] The weakness of the Salvadoran cultural identity is a phenomenon that I studied and wrote about for the graduate seminar History 5950 in the Fall of 2011 at the U of M. The title of my essay was "Becoming Campesinos/Becoming Mestizos: On the Construction of National Identity and Memory in Mexico and El Salvador in the Twentieth Century. A Comparative Study." My overall conclusion is that through the process of erasure of an Indigenous past that happened after the 1932 Matanza, Salvadorans were not able to develop a collective national consciousness in the same degree as their Mexican counterparts did. While Mexicans learned to be proud of their language, foods, heroes and other cultural aspects, Salvadorans learned to see foreign cultural elements as more desirable, further stigmatizing local practices associated with indigenous or peasant culture.

Although the presence and influence of the United States in El Salvador was not new, American popular culture began to reach the country with more intensity due to innovations that were facilitated by the reform projects that had started since the previous decade. The availability of electric power that came after the opening of hydroelectric dams, for example, paved the way for mass communication media and entertainment industries to reach larger audiences. American cultural elements that were delivered through the film, radio, and music industries had significant influence in the mindsets and cultural tastes of the Salvadoran people during the years under study, and particularly during the 1960s.

One of the first and most important means through which common Salvadorans learned about the world beyond national borders was the cinema industry. In 1954, just four months after the opening of the country's first hydroelectric dam, the government passed the Ley de Fomento de Teatros y Cines (Law to foment the creation of theatres and movie theatres), which ended the State's monopoly in the sector and encouraged the private construction of movie theatres by offering attractive fiscal incentives during the initial five years of the law.[330] At that time there were about six movie theatres in the country, all in the capital city of San Salvador. By 1970 the number had increased to sixty-five, with locations all over the country.[331] Cinema became a popular form of entertainment, even more popular than soccer. According to the Boletín Estadístico (Statistical Bulletin), for example, the total number of cinema tickets sold during the first

[330] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 1620, "Ley de fomento de teatros y cines," *Diario Oficial*, 165:197 (October 26, 1954): 7994. The only existing movie theatre chain, the Circuito de Teatros Nacionales, was owned by the government and was used exclusively to generate revenue for the maintenance of public nursing homes, orphanages, and hospitals.
[331] Howard I. Blutstein et al., *Area Handbook for El Salvador*, (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971),142.

trimester of 1970 was 3,942,441—a number far higher than that of soccer, which was only 188,524.[332]

Since the country did not have a commercial motion picture production industry of its own, the movies that Salvadorans watched were mostly from Mexico, Argentina, Italy, and the United States. Language did not constitute a problem for the U.S. productions since from the early 1940s the major Hollywood studios had invested in the development of a dubbing industry in Mexico with the aim of reaching the Latin American Market.

Although Mexican movies were popular, the projection of Hollywood productions was prevalent (fig. 3.3). Salvadorans became familiar with—and it could be argued that they even incorporated into their imaginaries—the work of now classic movie stars such as Elizabeth Taylor, Brigitte Bardot, Charlton Heston, Clint Eastwood, and Steve McQueen, among many others. In addition to providing simple entertainment, the big screen also introduced situations that were new and shocking for many of the Salvadoran audiences and that might have exerted an important degree of influence in their views about socially acceptable behaviors. Films like *Bonnie and Clyde, A Fistful of Dollars, A Clockwork Orange, Jesus Christ Superstar, and Zorba the Greek,* among many others, presented Salvadoran youth with scenarios that coincidentally exemplified similar ideas to those promoted by the educational reforms: disruption of the once clear concepts of wright and wrong, the use of reasoning over memorization, the questioning of established

[332] "Número de Espectáculos, Espectadores, y Valor Pagado en Colones, Segun Clase: Enero-Marzo," *Boletín Estadístico. Organo de la Dirección General de Estadística y Censos. II Epoca,* 85 (1970): 8. The popularity of the new form of entertainment moved many people from small towns to start up their own—unofficial—local movie business. They would purchase a small projector, travel to San Salvador to rent films, and would present them on the weekends either at the town's community house or any private house available for such activity. In addition to the sixty-five movie theatres, thus, there were other movie enterprises that brought cinema to the rural areas. See José Antonio Martínez González, "Historia del Cine en El Salvador" (BA thesis, Universidad de El Salvador, 2013), 66-93.

norms, and the ability to adapt to new situations. Through the big screen working-class Salvadoran youth also learned about the aesthetics, music, and political ideas of the counterculture of the 1960s, and incorporated those elements into their lives according to their own circumstances.[333]

Like cinema, the radio industry also grew to become a major window into the world. Before 1948 there were eight private and one government-owned radio stations in the country—six of them located in the capital city San Salvador. In the 1950s this number started to increase (also as a result of the availability of electric power) and the country saw the birth of some of the classic Salvadoran stations. Station YSKL "La Poderosa," (perhaps the most recognized radio station of El Salvador), for example, was founded in 1955, just one year after the inauguration of the first dam. Although the radio industry was not as dependent on foreign content as cinema, much of the music that these stations broadcasted made Salvadorans familiar with names such as Glenn Miller, Ray Conniff, Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, and Edith Piaf. American and European points of view on world politics were also received through programs such as El Repórter ESSO (Your ESSO Reporter), and the BBC News.[334]

The boom of the radio industry in El Salvador, however, happened in the 1960s after radio receivers became widely accessible to the working classes. This started around 1958 with the development of transistor radios, especially the pocket radios that were mass produced in Japan and that entered the Salvadoran market as a result of good

---

[333] Literature Professor Carmen Gonzáles Huguet speaks of this reality in her acclaimed play *Jimmy Hendrix toca mientras cae la lluvia* (Jimmy Hendrix plays while the rain falls), which is about a young working-class couple who spend their last hours together watching the Woodstock documentary film and are tragically separated after they exit the movie theatre. See Carmen González Huguet, *Jimmy Hendrix Toca Mientras Cae la Lluvia,* (San Salvador, ES: Editorial Rubén H. Dimas, 2004), 1-26.

[334] Jorge Vargas Méndez, *Para Oirte y Mirarte Mejor. La Industria Radial y Televisiva en El Salvador 1926-2000* (San Salvador, ES: ASDER, 2000), 69-70.

commercial relations—related to the cotton industry—that had been established between the two nations since the early 1950s. [335] During the 1960s the number of radio receivers grew to an estimated one million units, and the number of commercial stations reached forty-seven.[336] Radio became the permanent companion of industrial workers, of urban and rural housewives, of coffee pickers, and even corn growers.

The content transmitted through the radio waves had an impact on the formation of local popular culture expressions in the decade of the 1960s. Rock ‘n roll music, for example, was quickly adopted by the youth, who called it “música de la nueva ola” (music of the new wave) and began to reproduce it in their own language. Unlike in other Latin American countries, it did not take a long time for rock ‘n roll to reach the working classes in El Salvador.[337] By the mid years of the decade, the popularity of the genre was widespread; some of the most popular bands, for example, had their origins either in the recently constructed housing projects of San Salvador or in the working-class neighborhoods of the eastern cities of San Miguel and Usulután. Even small rural towns had a rock ‘n roll band.

[335] Jorge Vargas Méndez, *Para Oirte y Mirarte Mejor*, 113.
[336] Howard I. Blutstein, *Area Handbook*, 139, and “Broadcasting Stations of the World,” (Washington, DC: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1971), 1-238.
[337] In *Refried Elvis: The Rise of the Mexican Conterculture,* historian Eric Zolov argues that rock ‘n roll in Mexico was mostly confined to the middle- and upper-class sectors, reaching the working classes only around 1980.

Figure 3.3 Typical movie listing of the late 1960s in *El Diario de Hoy*, one of the two major newspapers of El Salvador. The page shows how Hollywood productions predominated in the cinema scene of the country. The specific issue is April 18, 1967.

When rock 'n roll arrived around the late 1950s and early 1960s, Salvadorans had already been exposed during many years to the influence of various American cultural expressions, institutions and individuals. In terms of religion, for example, the country had seen the arrival and significant growth of the Baptist Church, the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, the Mormon Church, the Pentecostal Churches, and the Assemblies of

God—all of which found acceptance among the middle and lower classes.[338] In terms of community organizations, the middle and upper classes formed the Lions Club International, the Active 20-30 Club, Rotary International, and the Boy Scouts (which thanks to the work of José Napoleón Duarte eventually opened its doors to working class boys). In sports, basketball and bowling became popular among the middle classes and some urban working-class sectors. Basketball was already popular since the 1950s and became even more after the Salvadoran national team won the gold medal in the VIII Central American and Caribbean Games in 1959. Bowling, although only in the capital city, also became popular after the opening of the Bolerama Jardín in 1964. Regarding popular culture, in addition to cinema and radio, the middle and upper classes read magazines like *Selecciones del Readers' Digest* (*Reader's Digest*), *Life en Español* (*Life*), and *Mecánica Popular* (*Popular Mechanics*).[339] For the wider readership, popular culture was available through the two main newspapers *El Diario* and *La Prensa*, whose comic strip pages were filled entirely with American content. Salvadoran readers learned basic ideas about the approaches to life and the sense of humor of their northern neighbor through classic strips like Rex Morgan M.D., Mary Worth, Steve Canyon, Li'l Abner, Peanuts, and Mutt and Jeff, among many others. Another memorable popular print medium widely available were the western-genre illustrated comics of Gene Autry, Roy Rogers, and Hopalong Cassidy, which were translated to Spanish and distributed by the

[338] Daniel Enrique Monroy et al., *Cien años de Presencia Evangélica en El Salvador. 1896-1996* (San Salvador, ES: Confraternidad Evangelica Salvadoreña, 1996), 33-129, and Howard I. Blutstein, *Area Handbook,* 81.
[339] *Life en Español* (*Life* in Spanish) was only published between 1952 and 1969.

Mexican publisher Editorial Novaro.[340] Since the western-genre proved to be popular, the Salvadoran market also experienced the arrival of the mass-produced pulp-like western novels written by the Spanish author Marcial Lafuente Estefanía, published by Editorial Bruguera. Through these novels, young readers were able to envision the lives and deaths of historical characters like Wyatt Earp, Jesse James, and Billy the Kid.[341] All these elements, along with the fact that the country was anxious to embrace "modernity" even at the expense of its own roots, predisposed Salvadoran youth to receive with open arms the new popular musical genre that was stirring up many societies around the world at the same time.

In its early stages—1960 to around 1963—rock 'n roll in El Salvador was listened to and performed by the privileged youth. The pioneer bands, which were formed by some students of the Externado San José, were Los Satélites del Twist, Los Hollyboys, and Los Supertwisters.[342] In their performances, which were mainly at student parties or as warm-up acts for concerts of other musical genres, they would play hits of the late 1950s that had already been Hispanicized (turned into a Spanish-language version) by the famous Mexican singer Enrique Guzmán—hits such as "La Plaga" (Little Richard's "Good Golly, Miss Molly"), and "Popotitos" (Larry Williams' "Bony Moronie"), among others. Their privileged upbringing, however, also allowed them to perform and record in

[340] Since 1950 when it was founded, Editorial Novaro specialized in the publication of comics. It became particularly successful in the translation, publication, and distribution of American comics for the entire Latin American market. In addition to the titles mentioned above, Spanish speaking readers had access to titles like *Tarzan*, *Superman*, *Batman*, *Captain Marvel* and many others.

[341] Marcial Lafuente Estefanía was a Spanish writer who traveled the American west between 1928 and 1931. His respect for the history, geography, and flora of the U.S—achieved though research and his travel experiences—allowed him to successfully transfer to the Spanish language the essential elements of the genre and to give a realistic portrayal of the old American west. He wrote westerns from 1943 until he died in 1984. The number of novels he wrote is estimated to be over 2,500. See "Marcial Antonio Lafuente Estefania," Real Academia de la Historia, accessed November 15, 2020, http://dbe.rah.es/biografias/11536/marcial-antonio-lafuente-estefania.

[342] Externado San José was a Catholic primary and secondary school for the elite run by the Jesuit order.

the original English language. Los Supertwisters' only record, for example, included Ray Charles' 1959 hit "What'd I Say," and was recorded completely in English in the voice of their lead singer Ricardo Jiménez Castillo—an architecture student who had nicked-named himself "Lord Darkie."[343]

In the mid-years of the decade the country experienced the foundation of two enterprises that proved to be path breaking for Salvadoran popular culture: Discos Centroamericanos DICESA (Central American Records), and YSRF, Radio Femenina (Feminine Radio). The tremendous boost that both of these institutions gave to the rock 'n roll scene extended the new subculture beyond the boundaries of the privileged class, eventually becoming rooted even among low-income and rural youth.

DICESA, the first music publisher of the country, was established in 1965 by U.S. and Mexican investors attracted by the Common Market. Its vinyl pressing plant was opened in March of that same year and it began pressing records from RCA Victor, London Records, and Discos Fuentes.[344] It also pressed for its own homonymous label, which was dedicated to the emerging local talents—the rock 'n roll bands.

YSRF, Radio Femenina was the first radio station of the country dedicated entirely to transmit content for the youth.[345] It began broadcasting on February 2, 1966 at 6 a.m. with Freddy Cannon's song "Action"—the theme from Dick Clark's music-based TV show "Where the Action Is," which had started the previous year in the U.S. After the

[343] Los Supertwisters, band, "What'd I Say," by Ray Charles, trac 2, Dicesa DCA/S 1003, 45 rpm, and *Buenas Epocas. La Nueva Ola de El Salvador*, directed by Mario Anaya (MAR Works, 2010), DVD.
[344] "New Record Plant Debuts in El Salvador," *Billboard. The International Music-Record Newsweekly*, May 8, 1965, 14. Eventually, DICESA also pressed records for WEA, Chrysalis, Hansa, Polar, and others. As a label only, DICESA had been present in the country since the start of the Common Market in 1960.
[345] The station owed its name to the fact that it had started in 1965 as a station for women. Since the project did not work as intended, it was completely re-structured the next year into a radio for the youth. The name was kept at the insistence of the listeners who called to request music and always identified the station as "La Femenina" instead of "La RF."

song, the radio host, Willie Maldonado, proceeded to announce how the station was ushering a new radio format for the nation—a musical format dedicated to promoting local musical talent and air the general preoccupations of the younger generations. La Femenina, as it became known, quickly became the voice of the country's youth. Its hosts Leonardo Heredia, Tito Carías, Willie Maldonado, and Orlando Orellana, among others, became esteemed national communicators and promoters of local talent. Tito Carías, who also worked for DICESA, is particularly remembered as the most active promoter of local musicians since he suggested what songs to record, participated in the translation/adaptation process, and sometimes even suggested names for the bands.

With the impulse given by these two enterprises, the country saw the rise of many new bands, some of which became emblematic in the history of Salvadoran rock 'n roll. Among these were Los Supersonicos (named after the 1962 animated comics "The Jetsons), Los Intocables (named after the 1959 TV series The Untouchables), Los Die Blitz ("The Lightnings" in German—name given by the leader of the band who was of German descent), Los Beats, Los Black Cats, Los Lovers, Los Mustangs, Los Vikings, Los Apaches, Los Christians, Los Juniors, Los Thunders, Los Kiriaps, and Hielo Ardiente (fig. 3.4). The preference that these bands had for English language names was also felt in the musical recordings. Even though they had material of their own, most of the major hits they recorded in the second half of the decade were Spanish versions of songs by English speaking groups either from the United States or Britain. A good

number of the songs that nowadays are deemed as classic, then, were based on the work of bands like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, and Creedence Clearwater Revival, .[346]

The bands of this period were no longer from the privileged classes exclusively. Los Intocables (the main rival of Los Supersonicos) and Los Mustangs, for example, were formed by young men from the colonias Vairo, and Centroamerica—two of the new working-class residential areas of San Salvador at the time. Los Vikings, Los Apaches, and Hielo Ardiente, which became part of the most remembered bands, were not from the capital city San Salvador, but from the eastern cities of Usulután and San Miguel. Likewise, Los Christians and Los Comets were from the western city of Santa Ana. In addition to these bands—which became part of the history through their recordings—there were many others from small towns that were not able to record but that nevertheless are still remembered by their people, and whose history shows the kind of acceptance that the new music had among the working classes. A small sample of the phenomena of small-town rock 'n roll bands in El Salvador were some groups from the Sierra Tecapa-Chinameca, a coffee producing region in the eastern department of Usulután. The town of Santiago de María, for example, had the band Los Inquietos, the town of Tecapán had the group Red Star (a name apparently taken from an American brand of active dry yeast, which was also sold in El Salvador), and the town of Ozatlán had Los Halcones. Although none of them achieved fame beyond that region, their performances at private and community parties contributed to spread the taste for rock and roll among the rural and mostly agricultural young workers of their towns.

[346] I use the word "based" because there were many instances in which the Spanish versions had nothing to do with the original English-language lyrics. Songs like "María la orgullosa" and "Por que llorar?" of Los Beats (which were covers of Credence Clearwater Revival's "Proud Mary" and The Beatles' "Don't Let Me Down," respectively), had lyrics that were written only with the goal of fitting into the music, and they don't have anything in common with the originals.

Rock ‘n roll, surprisingly—and although only during the last years of the decade—also received the support of the government, since the new cultural expression was in line with the philosophy that guided the education reforms promoted by the Minister of Education Walter Béneke. In November 1968, the major rock ‘n roll bands of the country were able to perform for an audience of about fifteen thousand at the First Youth Music Festival, which took place in the amphitheater of the recently created fairgrounds and during the Third Salvadoran International Fair. Out of this event came, the following year, a homonymous album which contained a written message by Béneke, calling Salvadorans to understand and nourish the culture of the new generations. Some of the statements of the message read:

> …With this first festival the Ministry of Education furthers its solidarity and relations with our dynamic youth. It promotes this popular musical trend and encourages the creation of new bands, soloists, and composers…
>
> …Partaking are youth from all over the country, moved by their enthusiasm and thirst for comprehension, with the hope to show those who still doubt the seriousness and capabilities of the youth, that the only thing that this generation wants is to be of service, to release their sensibilities and feelings, to help improve the culture of the homeland, and especially to contribute with a bit of happiness, love and understanding for everyone.[347]

After this festival the Ministry of Education continued its support by promoting other musical events using the facilities of the Circulos Estudiantiles, which were

[347] Walter Béneke, back-cover message, released in 1969 on “Primer Festival Música Juvenil de El Salvador,” Dicesa DIC/S 1021, 33½ rpm.

gradually being built throughout the country as part of the reform projects. Several surviving members of the bands that became prominent in the decade of the 1970s remember their beginnings at the Círculos Estudiantiles and regard Béneke as an important supporter of their aspirations.[348]

Figure 3.4. Covers of six of the most emblematic rock 'n roll albums of the 1960s and early 1970s in El Salvador. They show the tendency of the bands to adopt names of American origins, their preferred aesthetics and symbols, and also the beginning of a transition from the fun-rock approach into a socially conscious musical expression that called for solidarity and unity

[348] *Buenas Epocas,* produced by Mario Anaya.

In addition to the message by Béneke, another significant aspect of the "First Youth Music Festival" album was that it departed from the commercial oriented practice of covering already successful English-language songs, as it contained only original materials from the participating bands. These recording are important since they demonstrate the dawning of social consciousness that was taking place at the time among the Salvadoran youth. Songs like "La fuerza del alma" by La Nueva Generación and "Comencemos a vivir" by Los Apaches, for example, called for solidarity among social classes, renovation of society, and to question and analyze the causes of poverty. The album cover also contained a peculiar detail that revealed the degree of iconoclastic culture that the Salvadoran young artists had reached: among the images of young people sporting long hairs, miniskirts, and other such aesthetics, was the image of the monument to El Salvador del Mundo—the country's patron saint and national symbol—displaying the V-sign hand gesture and a peace symbol stamped on his chest (fig. 3.4).

Rock 'n roll by the end of the decade, thus, began to serve as a vehicle for many left-leaning youth to express social concerns and to protest against government. Arguably the best album of this period (and for some one of the two top albums in the history of Salvadoran music), for example, was the 1971 compilation titled "Unidad."[349] The album contained the two most famous songs recorded by La Banda del Sol—"Abriendo camino" and "El planeta de los cerdos"—which criticized the government's submission to the U.S. and signaled the ideological shift that many youth would take in the 1970s from hippiedom to guerrillas. The band's composer and lead guitar player, Carlos

[349] See Oscar Luna, "Los 10 mejores discos de la historia de El Salvador," El Faro.net, accessed November 22, 2020, http://especiales. elfaro.net/ es/los_10_mejores_discos.

Aragón, for instance, eventually became a field commander—el Comandante Sebastián—of the Fuerzas Populares de Liberación (FPL).[350]

The adoption of American popular cultural elements, especially music, continued to take place during the 1970s and beyond. Although Salvadorans did not exclusively consume U.S. imported music, the impact of it eventually came to partially define the identity of the Salvadoran youth. This became evident in the late 1970s and early 1980s when the first mass migration to the U.S. began as a consequence of the civil war. The young Salvadoran immigrants who had recently arrived to the city of Los Angeles, for example, often clashed with the already existing Latino population of Mexican origins over their popular culture inclinations. While Mexican Americans listened to oldies or hip-hop and dressed in baggy or pachuco-reminiscent clothing, the new arrivals listened to heavy metal bands like Judas Priest and Black Sabbath, dressed in tight jeans, sported long hair, and called themselves "Stoners"—to refer to the fact that marijuana was their preferred recreational drug.[351]

Chapter Conclusion

While the decade of the 1950s was the time when new socioeconomic foundations directed to raise the national standard of living were laid out, the 1960s was the decade

[350] Joaquín M. Chávez, *Poets and Phrophets of the Resistance. Intellectuals & the Origins of El Salvador's Civil War* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017), 66.

[351] Also, the typical heavy metal hand gesture, the "sign of the devil's horns," which they loved to display, eventually became a sign of identity for many of the young immigrants who, due to a variety of adverse circumstances, came to form the feared street gang known as Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13). They figured that the "devil's horns," when inverted, resembled the letter M, the first letter of the word "mara," which they used to refer to "a group of friends" or "gang." Ironically, the widespread use of the word "mara" among Salvadorans also came from their exposure to American popular culture. Mara—short for "marabunta" (a colony of army ants)—became a popular word in El Salvador after the arrival of Charlton Heston's movie *The Naked Jungle* (1954), which was translated into Spanish as "Cuando ruge la marabunta." See Emma Friedland, "La Marabunta," El Barrio Antiguo, accessed October 25, 2020, http://www.elbarrioantiguo.com/la-marabunta.

when those new foundations served to sustain larger socioeconomic developments that reached a wider number of people. In the political arena Salvadorans saw two unprecedented political occurrences that had tremendous impact on the country's journey towards political development but that are nowadays often overlooked or dismissed. The first was the creation of the Christian Democratic Party, whose rapid growth into a strong opposition supported by previously disenfranchised sectors began to transform the country's political system. The second, which originated out of the demands for political representation made by the new party, was the introduction of a system of proportional representation in the Legislative Assembly—a measure that effectively ended the single-party monopoly held by the military and allowed the development of a real political opposition.

The major economic developments of the decade were driven by the Central American Common Market, which was an agreement of economic cooperation among the five nations of the isthmus that started to operate in 1960. Once the Common Market was in place, the industrial activity of the country increased rapidly and transformed it from net importer into the top exporter of textile products, shoes, paper, chemical and metalworking products. The sector generated direct employment for about ten percent of the economically active population, and the average daily wages were higher than those in larger economies such as Taiwan, Singapore, and others.

In the social realm the country experienced a noticeable growth of the middle classes thanks to the availability of new jobs offered by the industrial and related sectors and by the expanding State. The improved wages that these jobs brought and the accessibility of mortgage loans through the Urban Housing Institute and the newly

founded Savings and Loans System helped thousands of workers to become property owners for the first time and consequentially join and expand the until then limited middle classes.

Low income and rural classes also saw life-changing developments. The elimination of payment of wages in kind and the establishment of minimum wages allowed landless peasants to gradually break from the paternalistic system that had made them completely dependent on the will of the landowner. With their new purchasing power and through the work of the Provision's Regulatory Institute (IRA) they were able to obtain more food and better nutrition. In terms of education the rural population received important benefits, as the reforms expanded the compulsory program and the underprivileged classes youth were able to study three additional years without having to pay tuition. The water and telecommunications projects, in addition to bringing their services to the rural areas, also brought new kinds of jobs which served as inspiration for the new generations to appreciate the value of education and begin aspiring for non-agricultural occupations. Last, the underprivileged classes also experienced improved access to healthcare with the further construction of hospitals and health centers throughout the country, the increase in the number of health-care professionals, and the introduction of family planning programs.

A major social project that benefited all social classes was the reform that took place in all levels of education. At the higher level, where the reform began, the National University opened its doors to low-income students, which drastically changed the demographics of the student body. In addition, the leaders of the institution began a series of projects aimed at turning the university into an instrument for national development.

These actions led to the discontent of the privileged classes who founded the first private university if the country, the Universidad Centroamericana UCA, which, ironically, evolved into one of the harshest critics of the government and the economic elites.

Primary and secondary education was also revamped by the Ministry of Education. Compulsory school was expanded from six to nine years, which, like at the university, allowed many low-income students to receive more years of education and aspire to even more after the 9th grade. The restructured primary school also received the support of an Instructional Television Program that supplemented the work of the classroom teachers in subjects and themes that required higher expertise. At the secondary level the reforms aimed for the modernization of the labor force. To do this it introduced a general education curriculum and organized eleven initial specializations, all of which gave students the double possibility of either entering the labor market or continuing into college studies.

The socioeconomic reforms that the country had been experiencing since 1950 opened the doors for foreign—especially American—cultural influences that easily displaced a relatively weak Salvadoran cultural identity. Salvadorans embraced the foreign cultural elements that represented modernity. American music, particularly, reached even the youth from the lower and rural sectors. Rock ‘n roll became, in the 1960s, a medium through which Salvadoran youth broke with traditional social conventions and began their own journey towards protest and eventually revolution.

The reform projects and actual changes that the country experienced in the 1960s, thus, had a significand impact on a large portion of the population. Thousands of common Salvadorans were empowered by political representation, improved wages,

home ownership, and better access to health care and education. These new opportunities made El Salvador, in the eyes of the international media, a progressive and exemplary nation. Although still distant from full democracy and wealth equality, El Salvador in the 1960s experienced an unprecedented level of socioeconomic improvement programs that made those years unique and worthy of the term “golden years,” or as Salvadoran nowadays called them, “Las Buenas Epocas.”

Chapter Four: Final Economic Changes & Political Downfall, the 1970s

Profile

From 1961 to 1971 the population of El Salvador increased from 2,510,984 to 3,544,648 [Appendix 3]. Population density was now 169 per square kilometer and annual growth had increased to 3.4 %. Approximately 60 percent of the population lived in rural areas and 40 percent in urban centers—only a slight difference with the figures from 1960. About 54 percent of the 1,666, 479 people that formed the economically active population were dedicated to agricultural activities, 16 percent to the industrial sector, 10 percent to services, 6 percent to commerce, about 4 percent to public administration, 3 percent to construction, and the remaining seven percent to various other sectors [Appendix 6]. [352]

Although coffee continued to hold its central place, the economy was now more diversified, relying on cotton, sugar and industrial products. The growth in this last sector had positioned the country as the top exporter of textiles, shoes and clothing, chemicals, paper products, and metalworking products to the Central American Common Market. GDP per capita was $256 dollars. [353] The literacy rate for the population ten years of age and above was fifty nine percent and average life expectancy was now 55 years.[354]

The physical transformation that the country had experienced in the previous twenty years was often the cause of confusion for visitors expecting to find the exotic aspects of the land right away. Japanese journalist Tsuyoshi Nakagawa, who visited the

---

[352] *Cuarto Censo Nacional de Población 1971. Volumen I.* (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1974): XXI-XXIX.
[353] James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus*, 175.
[354] *Cuarto Censo Nacional de Población 1971. Volumen II.* (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1974): XXII-XXVII, and "World Development Indicators. El Salvador. Life Expectancy at Birth, 1970," World Bank. DataBank, accessed December 1, 2020, https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators.

country in 1974, for example, wrote about this contrast in a travel book he published the following year. Some of his initial statements read:

> I arrived in San Salvador, the capital city and my first encounter with the country, one day in February 1974. After checking in at my hotel, I bounded out for a look at the Boulevard de los Héroes, the wide thoroughfare on which my high-rise hotel was located. Emerging from the cool of the air-conditioned lobby, I took deep, intoxicating breaths of the tropical air.
>
> …The boulevard was lit with neon signs showing against the crimson sky. Posh restaurants, steak houses, amusement centers, supermarkets, used car dealers, hamburger inns and pizza stands lined the roadway. Walking west, I came to a large drive-in theater. It was jammed with cars, most of them glittering new, containing young couples and families enjoying John Wayne in a gunfight on a huge semicircular screen. Looking up, I began to doubt that I was in Central America. The capital of the smallest Latin American republic looked unbelievably modern.[355]

Naturally, Nakagawa soon found the other face of the country that he was expecting. The record he left of this first impression, however, shows how preconceptions about the smallest of the developing Latin American nations were met with a surprising reality. El Salvador was actually developing, and although the scene he described of the Boulevard de los Héroes did not define the country, he and other

[355] Tsuyoshi Nakagawa, *El Salvador* (Tokyo, JP: Kodansha International LTD, 1975), 9.

travelers learned that the entire nation had already embarked on a quest towards transformation from a simple agricultural land into a modern republic.

The State

In 1970 El Salvador's government was under the administration of Colonel Fidel Sánchez Hernández who was elected in 1967 for a five-year term. His tenure was marked by four major influential events: the education reforms that began in 1967, the teacher's strike in early 1968, a brief and contentious armed conflict with Honduras in July 1969, and the presidential elections of 1972.

Regarding the education reforms, the Sánchez Hernández administration acted in an admirable manner, giving full support to the proposals and decisions of the Minister of Education Walter Béneke and his staff. His enthusiasm for the reforms was reflected in the continuous increase in expenditures for the sector, which at the end of his term constituted thirty percent of the national budget.[356]

The second major event was the teacher's strike of 1968. Fearing it would turn into a larger general strike, the government of Sánchez Hernández departed from the conciliatory stance that the government of Julio Rivera had with the sector and ordered the security forces to dissolve the demonstration. This action had major consequences for the future of the nation. Although the government eventually granted the teacher's requests, the relationship of the sector with the government quickly deteriorated and resulted in the formation, in 1971, of the first left-wing guerrilla organization, the Fuerzas

[356] Edgar Ventura, "El acceso a la educación primaria y la reforma educativa salvadoreña (1960-1972)," *Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales* 6 (2014): 77.

Populares de Liberacion (FPL)—founded by the leader of the teacher's union Mélida Anaya Montes and trade union activist Salvador Cayetano Carpio.

The third event was the 1969 armed conflict with Honduras, often referred to as the "Soccer War." This was a brief (July 14 to 18) but still bloody confrontation that resulted after Honduras initiated a violent mass expulsion of Salvadorans living in that country. The action was allegedly triggered by disagreements over the results of a soccer match that would have qualified the winning nation to enter the 1970 FIFA World Cup tournament. The roots of the conflict, however, were much deeper and lay in the growing resentment of the Honduran government who believed that their country was not obtaining the expected gains from the Common Market. The immediate consequence of the conflict was the disruption of activities of the Central American Common Market since Honduras withdrew its participation in the trading community and El Salvador lost an important part of its market. The Salvadoran government, however, took advantage of the situation. Since the Salvadoran troops were able to overcome their Honduran counterparts, they made sure to present themselves as the heroes who defended the homeland from the barbarian "mancha brava" (mad mob)—as they called the Hondurans—who had mistreated and expelled their fellow Salvadorans living in that country. The strategy, which included naming one of the main commercial streets as "Boulevard de los Héroes," worked well for the party of the military, who had been losing ground to the opposition led by Duarte. Many people renewed their support for them and, in the legislative elections of 1970, the PCN regained its dominant position by obtaining thirty-four seats against only eighteen won by the opposition —a remarkable recovery from the 1968 elections in which they had been close to losing control of the

Assembly after obtaining only twenty-seven seats against twenty-five for the opposition parties.

The last major and influential event that happened during the Sánchez Hernández administration was the presidential election of 1972. By this year the government was already in high alert about radical left-wing activities that were growing after the foundation of the FPL and about the possible repercussions of a victory by the candidate of the Christian Democratic party, José Napoleón Duarte, who was perceived as threat due to his discourse on radical wealth redistribution as a fundamental measure to bring modernity and democracy to the nation. As it became clear that Duarte, who had formed a coalition with other parties, had high probabilities of winning, the military began to take measures to avoid that outcome. The strategy employed was to use the power that the Legislative Assembly had to elect the president in case of narrowly contested results. In order for that to work, the government organized the presidential elections to take place two weeks before the legislative elections, which were also due in 1972.[357] The plan worked. The victory of the PCN over Duarte's coalition was very narrow (43.42 % against 42.14) and the final decision fell on the Legislative Assembly who, still under the control of the PCN, naturally approved its own candidate, Colonel Arturo Armando Molina, who led the country until 1977. These elections marked the beginning of a process of erosion of the legitimacy of the State, which was aggravated even more as the decade unfolded, and eventually developed into a political crisis and open violence in the later years of the decade. They also show that the political reforms that took place in this period had raised the expectations for political representation of the population, and that

[357] The general expectation was that the election of both branches would take place at the same time.

the non-compliance of those expectations by the government gave origin to a larger conflict.

In the 1970s, nevertheless, there were still significant economic and social accomplishments that made this decade (the first eight years, more specifically) more like the earlier period of reforms described above.

Economic Accomplishments

After the disruption of the Common Market due to the military conflict with Honduras in 1969, El Salvador's industry was affected as it lost part of its market. The country's industrial export shares to the area, for example, decreased from 32.9 percent in 1968 to 25.2 percent in 1970. Consequentially, the economy's average annual GDP growth rate decreased from the 6.5 percent maintained between 1960 and 1967 to a 3.6 percent in the period 1968-1971.[358] These circumstances motivated the government as well as the private sectors to re-orient the economic development efforts. The new goals were to increase and diversify the industrial production in order to find markets beyond Central America and to expand/improve the Salvadoran internal market.[359]

The idea to search for markets outside the Central American community was based on the ability to produce intermediate and capital goods that the industrial sector had reached in the late years of the 1960s.[360] The experience acquired in the previous years gave the sector the confidence to attempt to reach other more demanding markets. To assist the project the government passed in 1970 the Ley de Fomento de

[358] W. T. Wilford, "The Central American C. M.," 15.
[359] *Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social 1973-1977* (San Salvador, ES: CONAPLAN, 1972), 77.
[360] While in 1960 the major trade category was "Foodstuffs," which accounted for 45.7 percent of all trade, by 1971 that category had decreased to 18.2 percent. The category "Manufacture" has escalated from 28.2 percent in 1960 to 50.8 percent in 1971. See W.T. Wilford, "The Central American C.M.," 10-13.

Exportaciones (Law to Foment Exports), which offered generous fiscal incentives to all enterprises that would sell their products in countries outside the Central American Common Market.[361] In addition to the law, the government facilitated the establishment of special industrial parks for firms that would dedicate new plants exclusively to the new goal. The first park was the Zona Franca San Bartolo, founded in 1974.[362] Other projects included the construction of more hydroelectric plants, the expansion of the paved-roads network, further improvements to the Acajutla port complex, and a larger and modern international airport.

Naturally, attracted by the new incentives that included tax exemption on imports and sales for ten years, the industrial sector experienced a renewed influx of investment capital, especially foreign. The percentage of American capital, for example, increased from 11.9 percent in 1970 to 45.9 percent by the end of the decade. By 1978, of the sixty-seven international firms that had established operations under the new fiscal law, forty were from the United States. Other major transnational firms were from the Netherlands, England, Japan, and West Germany. With the Salvadoran firms that joined the new mode, there were a total of ninety-eight industrial enterprises that, by 1979, were dedicated to the manufacture of intermediate goods to be exported exclusively outside the Common Market. Most of the production concentrated in textiles, finished apparel, shoes, food, beverages, tobacco, petroleum-derived chemicals, rubber, plastics, metallic products, machinery and equipment.[363]

---

[361] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 148, "Ley de Fomento de Exportaciones," *Diario Oficial*, 229, 221 (Diciembre 3, 1970): 13978.
[362] The Zona Franca San Bartolo was created through an updated Law to Foment Exports passed in 1974. See Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 81, "Ley de Fomento de Exportaciones," *Diario Oficial*, 224, 180 (Septiembre 27, 1974): 10529.
[363] Carlos Roberto López, *Industrialización y Urbanización en El Salvador 1969-1979* (San Salvador, ES: UCA-Editores, 1984), 168-170.

The new approach made a significant impact in the economy. The annual revenue generated by industrial exports jumped from $68.6 million in 1969 to $269.76 million in 1979—a 293 percent increase.[364] Although slightly (and as a result of the 400% increase in coffee prices), the sector's contribution to GDP increased from 18.1 in 1969 to 19.4 by the end of the decade.[365] The industrial employment annual growth rate also increased from 2.4 percent in the years 1968-1972 to 5 percent in the period 1973-1977.[366]

Even though the number of transnational firms that established operations under the new exports law was only 98, the presence of some of them had important repercussions for the country, as their operations came to aid in complementing the country's quest towards modernizing the labor force.[367] One such plant was Texas Instruments, the renowned American manufacturer of electronics and electronic components. Texas Instruments El Salvador's first production plant was established in 1973 in the original industrial area of the Boulevard del Ejército, and a second plant was opened in the Colonia Santa Lucía after the export law was updated in 1974. TIEL produced integrated circuits, semiconductors, and hundreds of other products that were sold to various manufacturers of finished electronics from around the world. [368] The firm also provided jobs for about three thousand people and was an object of pride for the country during its twelve year stay.

---

[364] Carlos Roberto López, *Industrializacion y Urbanización*, 148. Revenues from industrial exports had experienced a decrease due to the disruption of the Common Market by the 1969 El Salvador-Honduras armed conflict. While in 1968 they had reached $81.7 million, the next year they had decreased to $68.6 million.

[365] World Bank, *Economic Memorandum on El Salvador, 1979* (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1979), Table 2.4.

[366] World Bank, *Economic Memorandum on El Salvador, 1979*, 22.

[367] It should be noted that while the number of firms was ninety-eight, some of these firms had more than one production plant.

[368] TIEL also produced electronic calculators for the local market.

TIEL is important for the history of El Salvador for various reasons. An examination of its activities shows that this firm came to help with the quest for progress that Salvadorans had started in previous years by providing a place that would develop a local technology-skilled labor force. According to Lito Ibarra, an engineer and ex-TIEL employee, the operators, technicians, and engineers were all Salvadorans who had studied in the National University and, after receiving job training, came to achieve levels of competence similar to those in plants the firm had in Japan. The plant also allowed students from other schools—like UCA—to tour the plants to see the actual production processes of electronic parts. When the firm left in 1985, many of the workers also immigrated to other countries and, thanks to their work experience, found jobs in related enterprises. The few engineers who decided to stay in the country like Ibarra, however, were able to use their experience at TIEL to help bring new technology like the Internet into the country's public sphere.[369]

In addition to employment experience, the firm also provided its Salvadoran workers with opportunities to cultivate their talent. For example, Salvadoran engineers created a device originally called "el torito pinto" due to its resemblance to the "Piebald Bull" figure used in local folk dances. The device was an addition to equipment used to test voltage regulators and was created entirely by a group of nine Salvadoran engineers. The small invention, eventually named "Delta Handler Modifications," became important to the point that, when the firm left the country, the Salvadoran engineers were asked to

[369] Lito Ibarra was the leading engineer and administrator that oversaw the attainment of the SV domain and internet connection for El Salvador in 1995.

create a manual for the design and operation of the device, and also to travel to Taiwan—the country where the plant moved—to provide training for the Taiwanese engineers.[370]

Another reason why the history of TIEL is relevant is because it shines some light on employer-workers relations that transnational firms like this had in the country. While transnational enterprises like TIEL are often regarded as exploitative and responsible for the poverty and underdevelopment of the third-world nations, the testimonies that speak of the workers experience at TIEL provide another opinion.[371] The testimonies that I have examined come mainly from online sources such as the Blog de Tecnología of Lito Ibarra in the newspaper *La Prensa Grafica* and the Facebook group "Nuestro El Salvador de Antaño" founded by photo collector Jorge De Sojo Figuerola. Both sites contain statements by ex-workers, children of ex-workers, and ex-workers of other similar plants. All of these statements describe TIEL in highly positive terms. Regarding salaries, for example, most participants stated that their salaries not only allowed them to make a dignified living but also permitted them to embrace the emerging culture of consumption. Other benefits included tuition for any technology related college courses that workers wished to take, a private grocery store for all employees, end of year bonuses, and even American toys brought for the workers' children on Christmas.[372] The major consensus among the testimonies is that the worker-employer relationship at the plant was cordial and beneficial for the workers. Some of the statements even hint at the possibility that the good conditions that workers encountered at TIEL might have had some kind of

[370] Lito Ibarra, "Texas Instruments: Made in El Salvador," Blog de Tecnología of *La Prensa Gráfica,* accessed December 5, 2020, http://blogs.laprensagrafica.com/litoibarra.
[371] For the role that transnationals had in poverty and underdevelopment see, for example, Tom Barry et al., *Dollars and Dictators. A Guide to Central America* (Albuquerque, NM: Grove Press Inc., 1983).
[372] According to Ana Gladis Urrutia in "Imagenes de El Salvador de Antaño," a Facebook Group, accessed December 10, 2020,
https://www.facebook.com/groups/Imageneselsalvador/permalink/10157137765478469

influence on the expectations and points of view of other Salvadoran industrial workers and on the development of the protest movements that stirred the country's politics at the end of the decade. In the Facebook group "Imagenes de El Salvador de Antaño," for example, user Jesús Menéndez, posted a picture of TIEL's main gate and initiated a discussion about the good wages that TIEL and other foreign firms paid despite local opposition. The initial sentences read: "In 1973 some American firms came to invest and generate employment. They wanted to pay $1.60 per hour, but they faced 'legal' opposition and were made pay minimum wages." Participants Oscar Aparicio and Edgar Grande added: "The Salvadoran oligarchy did not allow higher wages. The argument was that the workers of their own factories would ask for better wages since they would have the bad example from Texas Instruments," and "The excuse was that it caused instability in the economy as it would force local businesses to level wages."[373]

Finally, a reflection often made by many of the ex-workers is that if TIEL had remained in El Salvador, the country could have developed in a similar manner as Taiwan, where the firm moved part of its Salvadoran operations. Since the country had experience in production and a skilled labor force, some participants reasoned, other firms like Intel, for example, would have eventually chosen El Salvador to install their overseas plants, and the country would have realized the economic and other consequential benefits that, instead, went to Costa Rica.[374]

---

[373] Jesús Menéndez, Oscar Aparicio, and Edgar Grande in "Imagenes de El Salvador de Antaño," a Facebook Group, accessed March 8, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/groups/Imageneselsalvador/permalink/10157137765478469

[374] Based on comments by users Oliver Romeo Bolaños in "Imagenes de El Salvador de Antaño," Nelson Flores in "Nuestro El Salvador de Antaño," a Facebook Group, accessed March 8, 2021, https://www.facebook.com/groups/NESDEA/permalink/10157093157629346, and Aniceto Einstein in Lito Ibarra, "Texas Instruments: Made in El Salvador."

The intensification and diversification of industrial production that happened with the arrival of enterprises such as TIEL in the 1970s, thus, countered the setback experienced after the Salvadoran-Honduran armed conflict and helped to sustain growth of the sector. Although limited in number, the factories dedicated to the new mode of production did help in the country's goal to find markets outside the Central American area and also contributed to the development of a skilled labor force.

The other project for economic improvement that the government was seeking was the expansion of the Salvadoran internal market. This goal was a particularly delicate task for the government as, to see the project become a reality, the nation needed major restructuring in order to provide common Salvadorans with the means to embrace the culture of consumption. President Molina (who in his writings expressed his admiration for Oscar Osorio's ability to negotiate with the political and economic forces of the country) began to gradually steer the government towards the adoption of measures that would give the general population greater purchasing power and that could, in a peaceful way (like Osorio did), re-distribute the sources of wealth. He was, however, only able to carry out the first part of the project, which was to expand the internal market and establish policies that promoted a better distribution of income.

The main measures directed to expand the internal market were to increase employment, raise minimum wages, and create credit institutions for small businesses. The plan to improve employment opportunities relied on new jobs that would be created by transnational firms, thru the construction of the infrastructure projects aimed at supporting the new industrial goals (more roads, larger airport, more power plants) and

thru other public works projects that would generate employment, and on the promotion and creation of tourism enterprises.

The most significant infrastructure projects initiated in the 1970s were the creation of the Ahuachapán and Cerrón Grande power plants and the Comalapa International Airport. The new power plants which started to operate in 1975 and 1976 respectively, increased the country's electrical production from 115 to 280 thousand kilowatts. Work towards the new airport began in 1976 and was finished in 1979.[375] The airport was designed and built under the direction of the Japanese firm Hazama Gumi with electrical and communications equipment provided by Toshiba. Its construction was a large enterprise that, during the span of four years, generated various types of employment. Since it was located near the coast in the department (state) of La Libertad, for example, a modern highway of nearly 28 miles had to be constructed in order to get to the capital city in an average time of thirty minutes.

Other public works that generated employment included further expansions of paved highways and telecommunication networks, the construction of more facilities for the Circulos Estudiantiles and the Casas de la Cultura, the construction of the Cuscatlán Stadium (which was finished in1975 and became the largest soccer stadium in Central America with a capacity of 53,000), and of the Palacio de los Deportes (finished in 1978).

Along with the government-led public works the private sector also undertook the construction of two sites that are memorable. The first, which was accessible to all social classes was the Teleférico San Jacinto (opened in 1977), a family theme park located atop the San Jacinto mount that was accessed through a cable car system (fig.4.1). The games and the architecture of the park were considered modern at the time and contributed to

[375] Operations, however, started until January 31, 1980.

the positive image of the country that many international visitors were still getting (although it was beginning to change). The second site, relegated to the middle and upper classes, was the Autodromo El Jabalí (opened in 1979), which was the first motor racing circuit in Central America.

In addition to economic infrastructure and public works, a major effort to support the country's economy in the 1970s was the promotion of international tourism. In previous decades the country had already built the foundations for tourism industry: a steady supply of electricity, an extensive paved-roads network that reached sites of interest, hotels that adhered to international standards, fiscal incentives that encouraged that economic activity, and a government-run institution—the Instituto de Turismo—dedicated to procuring the growth of that sector. In the 1970s, especially because the country was seeking to create new sources of employment in order to expand local markets, the government decided to revamp the efforts to create a tourism industry that would attract foreign visitors. In order to do that, the direction of the Instituto de Turismo was given to two recognized entrepreneurs who stimulated the government's efforts by incorporating their business mentality: Ernesto Freund, who led the Institute from 1970 to 1974, and Roberto Poma, who directed it from 1974 to 1977. The major projects carried out by these two leaders were the expansion of hotel accommodations, the promotion of the country in international media publications, and the realization in the country of an international event that helped to make El Salvador a visible tourist destination for American and European visitors: Miss Universe 1975.

The initial step of these renewed efforts to expand the tourism industry was the expansion of the hotel offer. This was initiated by the private sector with the opening of

three new hotels: The Ritz, the Alameda, and the Camino Real. This last one was a five-star hotel that opened in 1972 and was part of the Wester International chain of hotels. The government also participated in the effort by renovating the Mountain Hotel that overlooked the Izalco volcano and by initiating, the construction of another five-star hotel, the Hotel Presidente, which was originally planned to serve as venue for a congress of the Inter-American Development Bank in 1977.

When Roberto Poma took over in 1974, the efforts continued with the promotion of the country in the international media. This was done by hiring the services of the American advertising agency Nu-Line Advertising Services Inc., and by establishing business agreements with various travel agencies that designed different vacation packages. A basic seven nights hotel package, sightseeing, and round airfare from Chicago, for example, started at $300. Other packages that included visits to neighbor countries Guatemala and Costa Rica varied from $475 to $517. In addition to the advertising of the tourism packages in all the major newspapers of the U.S., the promotion was supported by various articles that portrayed the country as an "unspoiled" and "affordable" destination that offered "unmarred beaches," "luxury hotels," and "exotic merchandises at rock-bottom prices," among other things (fig.4.1).[376]

[376] Phillip A. Kempster, "Unspoiled El Salvador—Good Things Come in Small Packages," *Los Angeles Times,* August 26, 1973; and John Haase, "A Letter Home. El Salvador for the Budget Minded," *Los Angeles Times,* March 17, 1974.

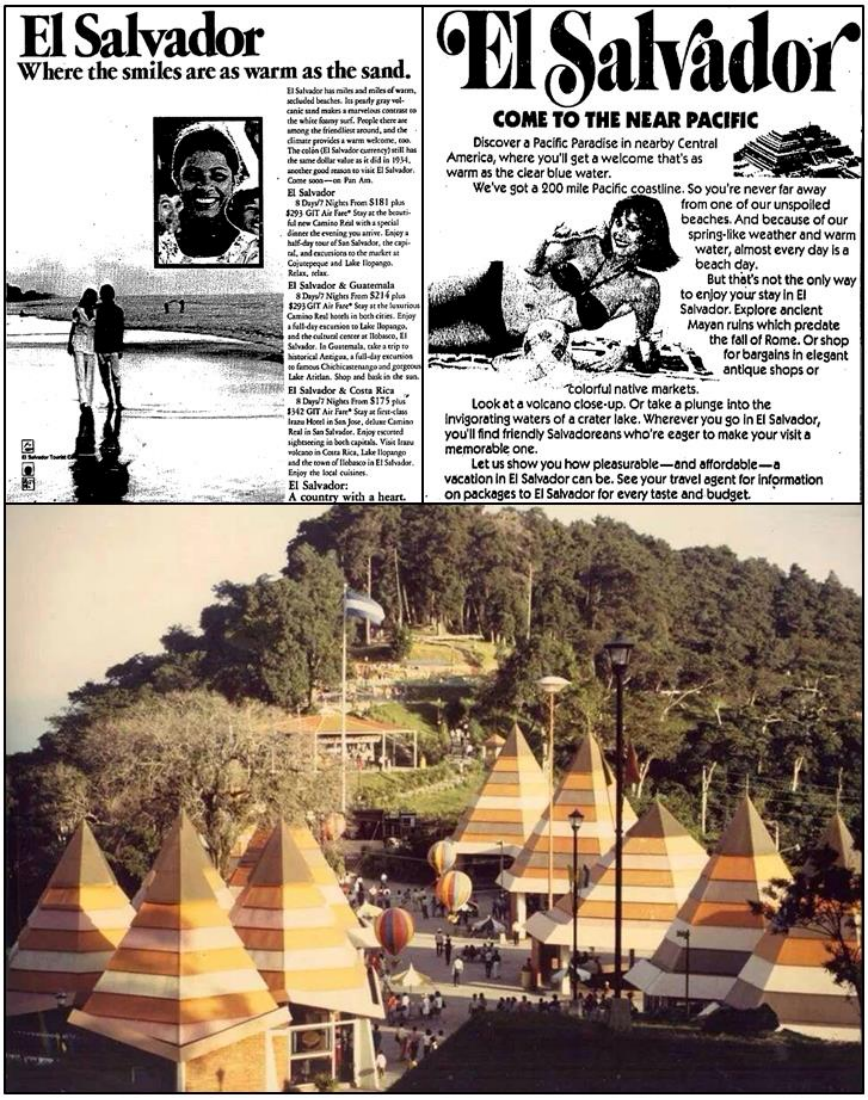


Figure 4.1 El Salvador. 1970s. Images showing the efforts to promote the tourism industry. Upper-left: Ad in the Los Angeles Times from July 13, 1975. It presented the country mainly as a "beach destination" and offered three packages that included visits to Guatemala and Costa Rica. Upper-right: Ad in the Chicago Tribune from November 19, 1978, promoting the coastline, the Mayan ruins, the volcanoes, and the native markets. Bottom: Postcard of the extinct family theme park Teleférico San Jacinto, opened in 1977 atop the San Jacinto mount and accessed through a cable car system.

The last major step was the realization of the 1975 Miss Universe Beauty Pageant,

This event was fully supported by the government and it cost $1 million to organize. The

contest was held on July 19 in the National Gymnasium of San Salvador, which was fit with a stage and scenography that simulated an ancient Mayan city. As expected, the event was broadcast through satellite television to many countries around the world and in the English language. This resulted in the country being exposed for the first time in its history as a worthy tourism destination. In the next few years—and with the help of other measures to diversify and improve the economy—the country saw a rise in hospitality related businesses that generated employment and made tourism a promising economic sector.

The other major measures aimed at improving the purchase power of common Salvadorans were an increase in minimum wages and the extension of credit opportunities to medium and small entrepreneurs. Minimum wages in the rural/agricultural sector were increased from $1.10 in 1973 to $1.50 per day in 1977, and in the urban areas from $1.60 to $2.80 in manufacture and services, and from $1.80 to $2.80 in commerce in the same period.[377] These amounts increased a bit more in 1978 as a result of the rise in international coffee prices.

In order to foment the creation of small industrial and commercial enterprises the government also created in 1973 two new credit granting institutions: the Banco de Fomento Agropecuario BAF (Agricultural Development Bank), and the Fondo de Garantía y Financiamiento de la Pequeña Empresa FIGAPE (Guarantee Fund for Small Business Financing).[378] The first of these was granting, by 1975, twenty five percent of

[377] Naciones Unidas, Comisión Económica para America Latina, "El Salvador: Notas Para El Estudio Económico de America Latina, 1977," (Mexico, DF: CEPAL, 1978), 29, http://hdl.handle.net/11362/25831
[378] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 312, "Ley del Banco de Fomento Agropecuario," *Diario Oficial*, 239:75 (Abril 25, 1973): 4178, and Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 324, "Ley de Creación de la Financiera y del Fondo de Garantía Para la Pequeña Empresa," *Diario Oficial*, 239:5 (Junio 7, 1973): 5738.

the credit given to agricultural, fishing, silviculture, and cattle raising cooperatives.[379] The second was for existing or new industrial and commercial enterprises that had a minimum of three employees and assets of less than $40,000.[380] Between 1973 and 1979 FIGAPE granted a total of 6,345 lines of credit to medium and small entrepreneurs.[381]

Furthermore, the government also fomented the growth of an already established savings and loans association: the Federación de Cajas de Crédito y de Bancos de los Trabajadores (Federation of Credit Unions and Workers' Banks).[382] After an important loan of $2 million given in 1962 by the Inter-American Development Bank and renewed support by the State, the system gained strength and, by 1977, had grown to forty branches distributed around the country, providing microcredits and other financial services to people who had never had access to conventional banking. In that same year the system granted over $35 million in various types of credits to both individuals and small business cooperatives.[383] Also in 1977 the system initiated a "Credit Program on Women Entrepreneurs" that, with the help of World Bank loans, granted $3 million in credit for women working in the informal sectors to startup or improve businesses like neighborhood stores, small restaurants, clothing manufacture, artificial flowers manufacturing, corn mills, and other small ventures.[384]

The private institutions that also extended their financing offers to the lower income population were banks such as Banco Agricola Comercial, Banco de Crédito

[379] World Bank, *Economic Memorandum on El Salvador, 1979*, 6.
[380] $40,000 was the equivalent of ₡100,000 Colones, the Salvadoran currency at that time.
[381] Carlos Roberto López, *Industrialización y Urbanización*, 179.
[382] The system had been originally established in 1940. However, it was until the 1960's and 1970's when its activities expanded throughout the country.
[383] Sistema FEDECREDITO, "Historia," accessed December 12, 2020, https://www.fedecredito.com.sv/conocenos/sistema/historia.
[384] Robert G. Blayney, "El Salvador Second Urban Project. Impact of Small Scale Enterprise. Credit Program on Women Entrepreneurs," (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1979).

Popular, Banco de Comercio, Banco de Desarrollo, Banco Mercantil, and savings and loans associations like Construcción y Ahorro, S.A. CASA, Ahorro Metropolitano S.A. AHORROMET, and Crédito Inmobiliario S.A. CREDISA. The number of lines of credit offered just by the savings and loans associations was 12,870, which amounted to a total of $119,938,680.[385]

These loans and lines of credit changed the lives of many common Salvadorans, as they helped them to incorporate in the expanding economy, to work towards the improvement of their quality of life, to climb the social ladder and to embrace the emerging consumer culture.

Besides the major measures that were taken to improve the local market, the government and the private sectors also undertook other projects that, although minor in comparison, are still worthy of rescuing from oblivion because they demonstrate the drive for socioeconomic improvement that still existed in these years. One such project was the strategic creation by the government of the Jiboa Sugar Mill, which began construction in 1974 and was inaugurated in 1976. The mill was built by the English sugar machinery manufacturer Fletcher & Stewart Ltd and was one of the most modern sugar producing plants of the country at the time, capable of processing 3,500 tons of sugar cane per day. The project was strategic because it had more than one goal. It would contribute to improve production of one of the country's agricultural exports; it would generate employment; and lastly, it would produce ethanol, which the government planned to use as an alternative fuel to face the impact of the 1973 oil crisis.[386] The other project, undertaken by the private sector, was the production of a low cost pick-up truck

[385] Carlos Roberto López, *Industrialización y Urbanización*, 174.
[386] Naciones Unidas, "Características principales," 147.

aimed at helping small farmers or other entrepreneurs improve their finances by owning the means to transport their product. The truck, which was put on the market in late 1975, was called the "Cherito," a diminutive of "chero," which in the Salvadoran Spanish means "little friend" (fig. 4.2). [387]

Although brief, the history of the Cherito serves to illustrate the kind of industrial abilities and aspirations that Salvadorans had in the years leading up to the civil war, especially since vehicle assembly is a feat mostly unthinkable to have happened in a "banana republic" like El Salvador. Nevertheless, sources show that the small nation had actually acquired certain experiences in such activities since before the arrival of the first and only "Salvadoran" truck.

The major vehicle assembly venture in El Salvador was the Fábrica Superior de Centroamérica, a plant that manufactured bodies for passenger vehicles (buses mainly) using parts supplied by the Superior Coach Company of the U.S. and installed them on various makes of chassis.[388] The plant was established in the 1960s and its buses were present in the public transportation routes of the entire country.[389]

[387] In Guatemala the truck was named Chato, in Honduras Compadre, in Nicaragua Pinolero, and in Costa Rica Amigo.
[388] In addition to Superior the country also had the Ensambladora Salvadoreña S.A., which assembled and distributed Japanese Honda motorcycles. Surviving sources about this enterprise are mostly its advertising in the newspaper "El Diario de Hoy" during the second half of the 1960s.
[389] The major competition was Industrias El Detalle, which were buses assembled in Argentina and were labeled as "luxury" or "special" transportation. With the exception of the color, most of the buses assembled at Superior had the typical look of an American school bus.

Figure 4.2 Newspaper ad of the Cherito, a low-cost pick-up truck "for those who thought they couldn't purchase a four wheeled motor vehicle." The ad is from the November 17, 1975 issue of *El Diario de Hoy*, one of the two major newspapers in El Salvador. It describes the truck's mechanical features, shows the partnership between the Fábrica Superior and Auto Palace, the fact that it was distributed throughout the country in five dealership branches, and the various trims/versions in which the truck was offered. The ad's slogan reads: "Less expensive than anything on four wheels. More efficient than anything on four legs."

In July 1969 the Fábrica Superior—which was owned by Colonel Mario Guerrero—served as the workshop for the improvised and quick assembly of armored combat vehicles that were sent to fight in the conflict against Honduras.[390] Since the Salvadoran army did not have enough reliable conventional armored vehicles at the time, the high command of the armed forces called officer Oswaldo Marengo, a mechanical engineer graduated in México, to rush-design and assemble several armored "tanks" on the chassis of REO M35 2.5 cargo trucks. The "tanks," which were nicknamed "Rayos" (Lightning) were used to transport troops, serve as bases of fire with .50 caliber M3 machine guns, and haul U.S. 75mm pack howitzers, among other things.[391] Their monstrous appearance was also said to have caused panic among Honduran troops and civilians, and therefore their success served as a precedent for subsequent improvised army vehicles and other ventures.[392]

Around 1974 the Fábrica Superior de Centroamérica undertook a project that General Motors was offering since 1972 to developing nations around the world and that was advertised as "fulfilling the moral obligation of industrialized societies to help the less industrialized countries."[393] The project was called Basic Transportation Vehicle BTV, and consisted in the assembly of a "truck-like" unit whose engine and drive trains were to be provided by General Motors and the rest of the components (chassis, body,

[390] Waldo Chávez Velasco, *Lo que no Conté*, 63-65.
[391] David Spencer, *Armored Fighting Vehicles of El Salvador* (Darlington, MD: Darlington Productions , Inc., 1995), 3-23.
[392] After the conflict with Honduras, El Salvador suffered an arms embargo (El Salvador was, in the end, deemed as the aggressor by OAS) until 1979. Based on their experience in 1969, then, the Salvadoran Army began to develop its own armored vehicles. Some of them were the Cashuat (which became the most representative tank of the Salvadoran Army during the 1980s conflict), and the Mazzinger-Z and Astroboy (names based on Japanese cartoon characters of the 1970s).
[393] General Motors ad, "How to Open Your Own BTV Assembly Plant," *New York Times*, November 13, 1973.

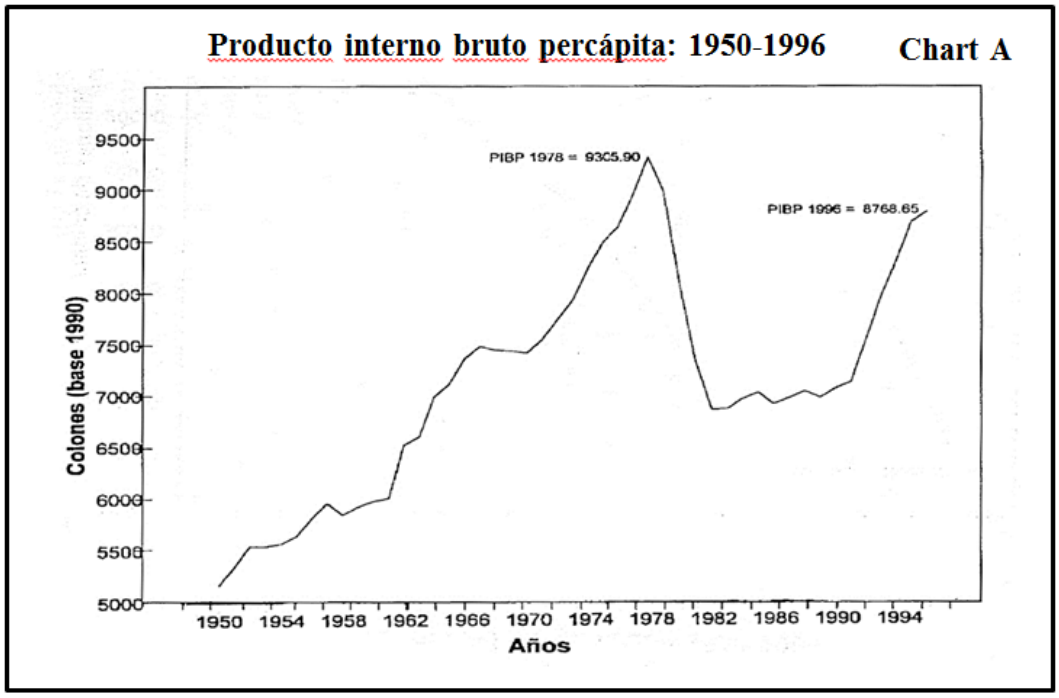
tires, windshield, bed, etc.)—were to be designed and provided by the interested country.[394]

The "Cherito"—as the car was named by the Fabrica Superior—appeared in advertising in the country's main newspapers in November 1975, and was sold exclusively at the Auto Palace, a dealership with branches in the cities of San Salvador, Santa Ana, San Miguel, Sonsonate, and Usulután. As it happened in other countries who adopted the project, the Fábrica Superior did not have the technical ability to produce curved metal shapes, and thus the body of the truck was made using flat pieces, which rendered it rectilinear and aesthetically unattractive. Its advantages, nevertheless, were its ability to carry half a ton of merchandise, and its cost, which, according to newspaper ads, was about $2,750 at the time.

Although its life in the market was short (by the end of the decade Auto Palace and Superior had closed due to the political instability) and thus its contribution to the country's economy was not as expected, the Cherito has an important historical significance. Together with the history of Texas Instruments and the Jiboa Sugar mill, its brief history further demonstrates how El Salvador was truly embarked in a process that sought to change the nation by taking advantage of any available opportunities for growth, by taking measures to adapt to the world economy, and by dreaming of shedding its agrarian and backward status with projects such as the assembly of a locally made vehicle that not only would help many people improve their finances, but that would create jobs and develop manufacturing skills for its citizens.

[394] James Mateja, "Basic Car for Poorer Countries," *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1972.

Table 4.1 Per capita GDP in El Salvador



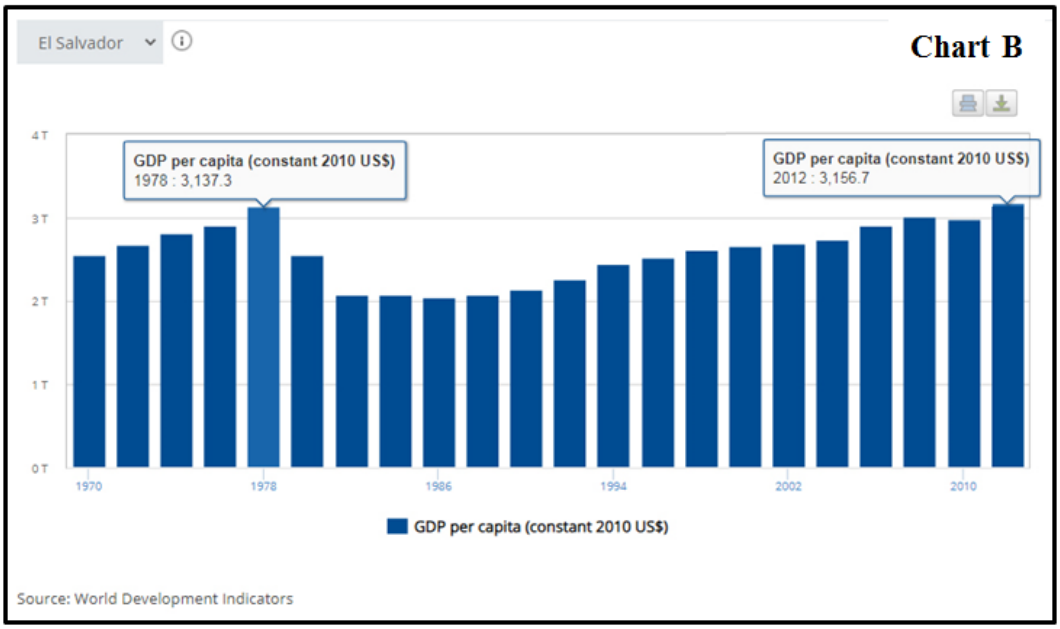


Chart A shows the gradual increase from 1950 until the year1978 and its subsequent fall. Chart B shows how it took the nation thirty-four years to reach a similar figure. Sources: Chart A. Alvaro Trigueros, "El Crecimiento Económico en El Salvador de 1950 a 1996," *Realidad. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades*, 61 (1998): 36., and World Development Indicators Database. World Bank. GDP per capita (constant 2010 US$), https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators (accessed November 12, 2020).

Although the projects for economic improvement of the 1970s were carried out under the impact of general recessionary conditions of the world economy and a tense local political climate, they still helped the country's economy to recover from the setback ignited by the conflict with Honduras, to maintain an average GDP growth rate of 5.03 % per year, and to reach the highest GDP per capita that El Salvador saw in the twentieth century: $660 in 1978—a feat that could not be replicated until thirty four years later, in 2013 (Table 4.1).[395]

Last Attempts at Social Change

In the decade of the 1970s El Salvador saw two kinds of social improvement projects: those that were successfully carried out and those that were planned but that did not become a reality. Both are important to study. Ironically, however, the projects that did not come into fruition are the ones that reveal significant details that challenge assumptions and generalizations commonly made about this period.

The social improvement projects that were carried out consisted mostly in the continuation of programs started in the previous decade such as the education reform and its ITV component, the construction of schools and health centers, and the expansion of public housing. One of the most outstanding was perhaps the housing project, which was carried through the Social Housing Fund Program FSV, created in 1973. The goal of this program was not the construction of housing units, but rather the creation of a fund to finance the acquisition of homes by industrial and commercial workers. The FSV granted

[395] $660 from 1978 equal $3,137 at constant 2010 prices, which is the number given in the introduction. See "World Development Indicators Database. GDP Growth (annual %)," World Bank. DataBank, accessed December 15, 2020, https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators, and World Development Report 1980, (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 1980), 110.

a line of credit for workers, who were free to find, on their own, a housing unit according to their needs and capabilities. The program was funded by a $10 million contribution by the State and monthly payroll contributions of 5.5 percent from salaries (5 percent by employers and 0.5 percent by employees). Another program of lasting impact was the creation in 1975 of the Instituto Nacional de Pensiones de los Empleados Públicos (INPEP) (National Institute for Pensions of Public Employees). The goal of this autonomous institution was to provide pensions for disability, age, and death to all public employees.[396]

The social project that caused major controversy since it would have caused a complete re-structuring of the nation was, however, the project for an Agrarian Reform. While the programs that aimed at a better distribution of income had been feasible due to the financial benefits they brought to the economic elites, an agrarian reform meant a re-distribution of the country's principal means of production, the land, and such a project in El Salvador would inevitably face the fierce opposition of the small group (10 percent) of land holders who owned 78 percent of the land.[397]

An agrarian reform, nevertheless, had been recognized as a necessary measure by the country's leaders since the early 1960s, particularly after the Christian Democratic Party began to raise the issue to more audiences. The first time land redistribution was seriously discussed in a public venue by various sectors of the Salvadoran society happened in January 1970, after the Legislative Assembly called for the First National

[396] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 373, "Ley del Instituto Nacional de Pensiones de los Empleados Publicos," *Diario Oficial*, 249:198 (Octubre 24, 1975): 4.
[397] World Bank, *Economic Memorandum on El Salvador, 1979*, 1.

Congress on Agrarian Reform.[398] The legislative body called for the presence and participation of the government, the Catholic Church, the National University and the Central American University, the National Association of Private Businesses ANEP (which included land owners), workers' unions, and peasants' organizations. The congress lasted five days (January 5 to 10) during which all sectors stated their positions and ideas regarding land redistribution. It was in this meeting that the Catholic Church, for the first time, expressed openly its support for such reform. In the end, however, the congress lost its original influence since the ANEP decided to withdraw its participation due to disagreements on who had the right to vote and to approve the Congress' conclusions and recommendations. The withdrawal of this powerful group signaled the clear opposition of the economic elites to any such project.

Although many people regard the Congress as a failure, the event succeeded in turning agrarian reform into a public issue that had been already raised by the government and that, eventually, had to be addressed again. This happened during the administration of Arturo Molina (1972-77), who took several concrete steps towards land redistribution.

Molina was an admirer of Oscar Osorio and wished to give continuity to the reform projects initiated by him in the early 1950s, particularly to the expansion of the power supply and the improvement of the country's ports. He was also aware and willing to work towards the more challenging goal of land redistribution.

---

[398] This unusual occurrence happened because, at the time, the Legislative Assembly's Board of Directors had been re-organized after eight deputies of the official party joined the opposition, making the Assembly become independent from the executive office—although only briefly from November 1969 until February 1970, when elections were scheduled and the official party regained its dominance. The main action that this independent Assembly carried out during that brief period was the organization or the first agrarian reform congress—the first of its kind in the country's history. Source: *Historia de El Salvador. Tomo II,* 230.

Since he was conscious of the opposition he would face in such project, he began to take measures that would strengthen the power of the State and to expand the governmental apparatus in a manner that would keep the major policy decisions within his close circle and without the overwhelming influence of private interests. In 1973, for example, Molina's government took control over the country's monetary, exchange and credit activities with the creation of the Junta Monetaria (Monetary Board), and semi-nationalized the Departamento Nacional Cafetalero (National Coffee Company)—an action that gave the government the power to negotiate the prices of coffee in the international market.

Along with the steps to strengthen the power of the State and limit the influence of the coffee elites, Molina also began to work towards an agrarian reform. The first step was the creation in 1973 of the Agricultural Development Bank, whose goal was to provide credit to small agricultural landholders. Second, and also in 1973, was the organization of a seminar (with the participation of AID technical experts) on agrarian reform for officers of the armed forces. The goal of this event was to generate consciousness among the army about the urgent need that the country had for land redistribution and of the role that the army had to take in such a process. Third, a group of deputies of the Legislative Assembly were sent to Perú to observe and learn from the agrarian reform experience that country had undertaken since 1969 under the administration of General Juan Velasco Alvarado. After this the government asked the Organization of American States to help with technical assistance in conducting a study that would map out in detail the different agricultural zones of the country in order to channel the adequate resources for their development. The OAS technical mission

produced, in 1974 and 1977 respectively, two volumes with the requested information.[399] A last foundational step was the creation, in 1975, of the Instituto Salvadoreño de Transformación Agraria ISTA (Salvadoran Institute for Agrarian Transformation), which was to design and carry out a project of agrarian reform. [400] The creation of the ISTA was announced through television by Molina in a speech that urged the different sectors to support the measure and that, at the same time, presented the reform as an already started and inevitable process. Some of his statements were:

> We can't ask for patience from those who have nothing. We can, however, ask from those who have much to understand and to share a little. Such an act not only would bring justice, but will guarantee harmony within the Salvadoran family and also the future of our children.
>
> Salvadorans: the decision has been taken and we will not desist from our purpose to give rural workers a more humane treatment through measures that do not seek to destroy property, but to create a higher number of land owners. We are sure that in this manner we will achieve higher production and, mainly, we are guaranteeing a rational distribution of the income that originates from the fruit given by our land.[401]

The first and only concrete step that the ISTA could take happened in June 1976 with the creation of the first agrarian transformation zone—a pilot project on which

[399] *El Salvador. Zonificación Agricola. Fase I,* (Washington: OAS, 1974), and *El Salvador. Zonificación Agricola. Fase II*, (Washington: OAS, 1977).
[400] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 302, "Ley de Creación del Instituto Salvadoreño de Transformación Agraria," *Diario Oficial*, 247:120 (Junio 30, 1975): 7506.
[401] *Política de Transformación Agraria del Presidente Molina*, (San Salvador, ES: Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería. Departamento de Información Agropecuaria, 1975), 55-57.

subsequent stages of the program would build. The zone was constituted by 150,000 acres of land from the eastern departments of San Miguel and Usulután that would be redistributed among 12,000 families.[402] The measure was aggressively opposed by the Frente de Agricultores de la Region Oriental FARO (Eastern Region Farmer's Front) who, along with the ANEP, organized a publicity campaign to discredit the government based on the idea that the State was imposing its power in the economic life of the nation in negative ways. Besides the opposition of the conservative sectors, left-wing organizations like ANDES also rejected the project as a program dictated by Yankee imperialism. Although there were various rural workers' organizations that supported the project, the power of the economic elites ultimately prevailed. By October 1976, Molina had realized that the pilot project had generated a degree of chaos that could only be contained by canceling the project all together. A final and perhaps determinant factor that contributed to the decision to cancel it was a straightforward threat on his life given by the then president of the ANEP, who one day burst into Molina's office wielding a firearm and bluntly demanding an end to the reform.[403]

Although the project for agrarian reform did not materialize, its history is important for this project because it reveals facts that challenge assumptions that are often made about this period of time. First, it shows that there was a significant disagreement between the government and the private sector in terms of desires and approaches to change the socioeconomic realities of the country. Second, it shows that

[402] *Historia de El Salvador. Tomo I,* 238.
[403] This anecdote was narrated by one of the first Salvadoran (who wishes to remain anonymous) religious activists who embraced liberation theology in the late 1960s in an informal meeting of participants of the 2014 Lozano Long Conference "Archiving the Central American Revolutions, held at the LLILAS Benson Library in the University of Texas at Austin. Further details about this anecdote were reviewed with the same person (who is now a scholar and a community activist) in a November 2020 virtual (Skype) conversation.

the State posed an unprecedented, open, and even hostile challenge to the economic elites. Third, it demonstrates that major programs for socioeconomic change such as an agrarian reform were not ideas proposed exclusively by left-wing revolutionary movements. And fourth, it challenges the idea that the military, in their role of watchdogs of the interests of the oligarchy, were the main obstacle for the socioeconomic development of the country. The unsurmountable obstacle, this history shows, was the opposition of the conservative economic elites. Their staunch resistance to the growing demands for land re-distribution gradually steered the working class sectors to seek alternatives to the failed efforts of the government and, eventually, to the civil conflict.

Political Downfall

In the 1970s the course of political reforms that had been taking place since 1950 came to a sudden stop. Factors such as the population's rise in expectations for better distribution of the country's wealth, the increasing adoption of revolutionary ideals among the student population, and the consequential heightening of the anti-communist position of the government and the conservative sectors, fueled a process of polarization that ended the processes of political opening, the drive for socio-economic reforms, and ultimately gave origin to the armed conflict of the 1980s.

Although the government still promoted and supported projects for economic and social improvements, it did not work on political reforms towards a more democratic system. Instead, it rolled back to its pre-1948 preoccupation of maintaining social order. In the following paragraphs I explore possible origins of such a change. I show how some specific episodes of violence, which are mostly dismissed in the dominant narratives, had

influence in the decision-making process of ruling leaders and in the consequential polarization that the country experienced at the end of the decade.

While the Salvadoran government had always been openly anti-communist, during the previous two decades it had maintained a position of relative openness and even cooperation with left-leaning sectors. President Jose María Lemus, for example, allowed the return to the country of all political exiles (including communist activists), and Julio Adalberto Rivera even turned on the conservative sectors that wanted to secede from the National University to support the left-leaning university officials—an action that, as I stated before, earned him the label of "communist conspirator" by some of his colleagues.

By the late 1960s, however, left-wing activism began to take a radical turn. The disagreements between the teachers' union ANDES and the Minister of Education that began over matters related to the Education Reform gradually led to heated confrontations that strained the disposition to negotiate on both sides. By the end of April 1968, when the ongoing teacher's strike threatened to turn into a second general workers' strike, the government intervened with its security forces to dissolve it. Even though in the following months the government passed legislation granting the teachers' demands, the relationship between the two sides had been ruptured and the teachers' union became, from then on, a harsh critic of the government. In April 1970, the leader of the union Mélida Anaya Montes, along with communist activist Salvador Cayetano Carpio and other university professors founded the Liberation People's Forces (FPL)—the first left-wing guerrilla organization in the country.

The radicalization of the teacher's union was accompanied by a similar trend in the student's organizations at the National University. In 1969, for example, some students founded the Frente Universitario Estudiantil Salvador Allende, FUERSA (Salvador Allende College Students' Front)—a group named after the then candidate to the presidency of Chile. This was just one of various radical left-wing organizations that began to stir the University's political activities by applying a rigid concept of class struggle, leading to a conflict between the students and faculty and the university's authorities.[404] By the end of the year these revolutionary organizations had started a strike in the program of General Studies, protesting the measures introduced in the early 1960s by Dr. Fabio Castillo. The strike developed into serious confrontations with the program's faculty, with the administrative authorities, and even the University's president. This activism also began to undermine traditional students' organizations like the Asociación de Estudiantes Universitarios Salvadoreños AGEUS (Salvadoran University Students' Association), giving way to the leadership of the new extreme-left groups, some of them proposing armed struggle as the only method to restructure the country. One of those groups became the second most powerful (after the FPL) guerrilla movement in the country, the Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo (ERP) (People's Revolutionary Army), which made itself known to the public in 1972 with the killing of two deputies of the National Guard.[405]

In addition to the radicalization of teachers and many college students, the country also saw the rise of a third movement that, although not violent, also posed a threat to the status quo. This movement happened within the Catholic Church when a

[404] See Mario Salazar Valiente, "Universidad Ocupada y Ultraizquierdismo (Reflexiones en Torno a la Experiencia de El Salvador)," *Revista de la Universidad Autónoma de México*, (September 1973): 32.
[405] Marvin Galeas, *Crónicas de Guerra* (San Salvador, ES: Editorial Cinco, 2012), 92.

significant sector of its clergy began to embrace Liberation Theology, a religious philosophy promoted in the Second Episcopal Conference of Latin America, held in Medellín, Colombia, in 1968. The movement led many priests to work against social injustice through the foundation of Basic Ecclesiastical Communities, organizations that helped rural workers become conscious of their life circumstances, develop a sense of community through grassroots democracy, and prepare to engage in political actions when necessary. These activities, unsurprisingly, created concern among the landed elites, especially when priests began to speak publicly about the country's need for land redistribution. One of the first examples of the confrontation between the church and the economic powers happened in 1970 at the First National Congress on Agrarian Reform that was called by the short-lived independent Legislative Assembly. During the event, José Inocencio Alas, a priest who was helping organize the first base ecclesial community in the municipality of Suchitoto, openly expressed his support for the project and suggested that such a reform must be carried out based on the demands of the beneficiaries, who should be allowed to organize politically to better articulate their needs. This opinion earned him a few hours of abduction at the hands of a paramilitary group that psychologically tortured him, warned him about the danger that his activities meant, and then abandoned him at night in the middle of the countryside.[406]

Another important case that attests to the profound impact that Liberation Theology was having in the process of political awakening of the countryside people was that of Fr. Rutilio Grande and his work in the community of Aguilares. Grande began to work in this small town in 1972. One of his first acts was to change the traditional

[406] See José Inocencio Alas, *Iglesia, Tierra y Lucha Campesina: Suchitoto, El Salvador, 1968-1977* (San Salvador: Algier's Impresores, 2003), 62-74.

relationships that the clergy had with the rural working classes by avoiding the role of ecclesiastical authority and adopting a servant-leader model. With this approach, he was able to get close to the people and to guide them to self-evangelize, self-elect their leaders, and to use their religious faith in practical ways to bring justice to the community.[407]

Grande's approach challenged the paternalistic system that had had existed for much time between priests and parishioners as well as between landowners and peasants. The work that he had initiated in the town of Aguilares also extended to other communities and ultimately accounted for ten urban and twenty seven rural Christian base communities. The catechists and delegates of these communities (who had been trained by Grande) eventually came to assume positions of leadership in local political organizations and peasant unions.[408] By 1977, when the conflicting political views had led to widespread acts of violence, Grande was assassinated by a paramilitary group. His death had enormous impact on Archbishop Oscar Romero, who from then on began to denounce more actively the injustices that the conservative sectors were committing against the working classes.

A last source of concern for the economic elites and the government was the growing radicalization of labor organizations and the resulting increase in labor strikes. By the mid-1970s there were about fifty industrial unions that had formed the Federación Sindical Revolucionaria (Revolutionary Unions' Federation), an organization that was part of the Bloque Popular Revolucionario (Popular Revolutionary Block)—an umbrella organization created by the FPL that aimed to bring together union organizations from

[407] See Thomas M. Kelly, *When the Gospel Grows Feet. An Ecclesiology in Context. Rutilio Grande, SJ, and the Church of El Salvador* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2013), 151-165.
[408] Ibid, 193.

different sectors. The number of strikes intensified. Just between the years 1976 to 1977 there were thirteen labor strikes that involved about five thousand workers.[409] From the second half of 1977 onward, however, the number increased even more.

The growth and radicalization or labor organizations during this decade happened not only in the urban centers, but also in an unprecedented form in the countryside. With the support of the Liberation Theology movement, for example, the Christian Federation of Salvadoran Peasants FECCAS shifted from its initial focus on basic cooperativism to the active expression of demands for agrarian reform, better wages, lower land lease fees, better prices for farming inputs, and the general improvement of life conditions for peasants. The expansion in the number of base communities under the guidance of the church also gave origin to the second most important peasant organization, the Countryside Workers Union (Unión de Trabajadores del Campo UTC)—formed by communities from the departments of San Vicente (in the eastern region of the country) and Chalatenango (in the north). The UTC was formed in 1975 and, in 1976, joined forces with FECCAS to express their demands directly to the Legislative Assembly. Since their demands—which included the modification of the labor code to improve the conditions of agricultural workers—were unmet, the coalition FECCAS-UTC gradually started to organize protests that developed into violent confrontations with the State's security forces. By 1977 the union had become under de influence of the FPL after it joined the Bloque Popular Revolucionario, and started to organize the seizure of lands in various parts of the country.[410] From this moment, the coalition FECCAS-UTC was

[409] Mario Flores Macal, "El Movimiento Sindical Salvadoreño. Características Principales," *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos,* 6 (1980): 23.
[410] Francisco Joel Arriola, "Federación Cristiana de Campesinos," 68.

regarded as a communist organization by conservative sectors of the army and the economic elites.

One of the initial and major acts of violence that happened in this decade and that had tremendous impact in the future of the country—impact usually understudied or directly dismissed in current narratives—was carried out by a student organization called El Grupo, a precursor of the ERP formed by students of middle and upper middle class origin such as Joaquín Villalobos, Ana Guadalupe Martínez, and Rafael Arce Zablah. In the morning of February 11, 1971, El Grupo kidnapped Ernesto Regalado Dueñas, a 36 year-old business entrepreneur, descendant of two of the wealthiest families of the country. The goal of the kidnapping was to ask for a ransom of $1 million that would help finance the activities of the new guerrilla. The ransom did not mean a problem for the family, who was more than willing to pay. Nevertheless, after nine days, the captors decided to assassinate Regalado. His body was found on an old peripheral road outside the capital city, blindfolded and with obvious signs of torture.

Regalado's death shocked economic elites. He was well known not only for being a descendant of the oldest political and economically powerful families, but also because he had made himself a name by organizing and financing the Festival Internacional de Música (International Music Festival), which in the previous two years had brought to the small nation important international artists such as Pablo Casals, Van Cliburn, Alexander Schneider, and Alberto Ginastera, among others.[411] The fact that he was a member of the economic elite, however, had direct consequences on the political stance of the government and the wealthy class. The government strengthened its National Security

[411] Waldo Chávez Velasco, *Lo que no* Conté, 123-126, and Luis Escalante Arce, *Sacrificios Humanos Contra Derechos Humanos. Relato del Secuestro de un Banquero Salvadoreño,* (San Salvador, ES: Edilit, 1991), 56.

Agency and put under the direct command of the executive an old political control apparatus, the Organización Democratica Nacionalista, ORDEN (Nationalist Democratic Organization). The National Security Agency worked in identifying all those who were involved in anti-government activities, and ORDEN was restructured into a well-organized militia force whose task was to keep communism activists away from the rural population. The elites, on the other hand, expanded the anti-communist paramilitary organizations that were the precursors of the death squads that began to claim the lives of many people since the end of the decade and throughout the 1980s.

One year after the assassination of Regalado the country experienced two more events of enormous impact for the future of national politics. The first was the deceitful process through which the party of the military asserted is permanence in the executive seat. The second was the intervention, cancelation of autonomy, and closure of the National University. When Molina assumed the presidency on July 1, 1972, revolutionary effervescence at the National University had reached new heights. In addition to the literal application of the concept of class struggle in the student-professor relationships, the radical left organizations had also introduced the idea that the University's traditional centers of power had to be destroyed to give way to the power of the students. Such line of reasoning also led these organizations to conclude that the University was an important part of the bourgeois system, and thus that, if destroyed, an important part of the system

was also destroyed and their revolutionary movement wouldn't lose a thing.[412] Students at the School of Law—where radicalization apparently had taken a stronghold—initiated a movement that resulted in the implementation of a Gobierno de Autogestión Estudiantil (Self-Management Student Government), which dismissed most university authorities and forced many faculty to resign. A major issue that was decided under the influence of this entity was the admissions policy of the School of Medicine. Traditionally that school had been rigorous in its process to accept new students. The new student organizations, however, pressured the University's Superior Council to approve an open doors policy that would accept automatically all those who applied and complied with the basic requirement of having finished secondary education.

The situation, thus, was essentially anarchic. The country's Medical College and the Association of Professionals asked the incoming president to intervene, and on July 19, after the Supreme Court and the Legislative Assembly had approved the necessary resolutions and decrees to do so, the armed forces occupied the central and regional campuses of the University, arresting in the process hundreds of students and many professors and administrators and stopping all kinds of activities. In the night-time

[412] According to Mario Salazar Valiente, a Salvadoran writer, social activist, and Dean of the School of Economics at the National University during the 1960s, the UES experienced in the latter years of that decade a wave of "ultra-left" activism that led students to analyze and apply Marxist thought in simplistic and uncompromising ways. Several radical ideas were incorporated in the student's activism. The first was that class conflict had to be expressed in the student-faculty relations. The second was that all traditional organizations based on representative student government had to be replaced by "mass collegiate leadership"—where the mass of students assembled constantly to resolve everything pertaining to their education and the university. The third one was that "The University was an important part of the system. If the university was destroyed, then part of the system was destroyed, and the revolutionary movement wouldn't lose anything"—the University, the radical students thought, was a bourgeois institution that was forming all the professionals who would serve the dominant class and the State, and thus, destroying it was a "convenient action for the revolution." Salazar Valiente also states that the students reasoned that an occupation of the University by the armed forces would also serve as a detonator that would trigger a revolutionary movement among the people. Their intense wave of protests and anarchism, thus, aimed at provoking the government into an intervention/occupation. See Mario Salazar Valiente, "Universidad Ocupada y Ultraizquierdismo," 28-37.

televised news of that same day President Molina sent a message to the nation stating that the occupation was done in order to save the university from the hands of communism. The consequence of the chaos was that the Central American University Superior Council decided to expel the UES from the Central American College Confederation (entity formed in 1948 to promote regional integration and improvement of high education in the isthmus), and the institution remained closed for one entire year.[413]

The anarchy inside the university and the government's intervention was a significant episode because it marked the time when all students of the National University started to be unreservedly labeled as dangerous communists by the conservative military and civilian sectors. Since the mistakes committed during the revolutionary upheaval had discredited the institution, when the government intervened the population did not protest, and some sectors (the middle sectors) even supported the measure.[414] This stance led some factions of the military to embrace a radical position towards students and begin to actively harass them and, eventually, repress them with extreme violence.[415]

One of the initial major manifestations of violence against students from the conservative sectors of the government occurred on July 30, 1975, during a student protest that was organized to defend their right to hold a traditional university event

[413] Mario Flores Macal, "Historia de la Universidad de El Salvador,"135.
[414] One of the mistakes that students committed in their quest to destroy the traditional centers of power, for example, was to denigrate ex-University President Dr. Fabio Castillo Figueroa by accusing him of being a CIA agent. Source: Mario Salazar Valiente, "Universidad Ocupada," 35.
[415] Such attitude towards communism and possible communist activists was also heightened by the international news scene, particularly after September 11, 1973, when the government of Salvador Allende fell after a coup orchestrated by the U.S. The message that the conservative military factions of El Salvador got from that event was that not only they had done the right thing by making sure that Duarte—an Allende-like politician, in their eyes—did not win the presidential elections, but that they were also right rescuing the university from the control of communism and continuously combating the enemies of democracy, which they saw embodied in all college students.

known as Desfile Bufo (Buffo Parade).[416] The government's security forces, under the command of General Carlos Humberto Romero, dissolved the event by firing directly at the protestors. The number of deaths is still unknown due to the fact that the security forces blocked the area and removed the bodies from the scene. This time, "the 1975 student massacre," as it came to be known, generated widespread discontent and disapproval of the government by the general population.

By 1975 the growing political polarization was also affecting the revolutionary movements. While Dr. Fabio Castillo Figueroa was able to survive an accusation of being an agent of the CIA made by the radical student associations, Roque Dalton, a member of the ERP, did not have the same luck. Dalton, who was a known left-leaning journalist and poet, had joined the ERP in 1973. After just two years he found himself in a serious dispute with the groups' leadership, who ended up accusing him of being a CIA agent and executing him. This led to a split in the ERP, with those who did not approve of Dalton's execution leaving to form another guerilla group, the Fuerzas Armadas de la Resistencia Nacional, FARN (National Resistance's Armed Forces). Around the same time, Dr. Fabio Castillo Figueroa, who had gone in exile to Costa Rica, was working to form yet another revolutionary organization, the Partido Revolucionario de los Trabajadores Centroamericanos, PRTC (Revolutionary Party of Central American Workers), which was formally founded in January 1976. The PRTC would be the last revolutionary organization that, together with the FPL, ERP, FARN, and the Communist

[416] The Desfile Bufo was an old tradition carried by higher education students and expected by the general population. It provided an important space for social and political critique, and it often satirized the country's public figures. In the past twenty years, the military had been the favorite target for satire. By 1975, however, the military no longer had the disposition to accept such expressions of criticism. On July 25, the university students at the west campus (Santa Ana) were in the process of starting the parade but were forcefully stopped by the security forces. The protests in San Salvador on July 30 were to claim the student's right to conduct the event.

Party of El Salvador, PCS would form the guerrilla coalition known as Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional, FMLN (Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front) in 1980.

By 1976 the degree of animosity from the military towards students and other revolutionary organizations had led the security forces to detain and hold in clandestine centers dozens of young revolutionary activists, some of them part of the leadership of the guerrilla organizations.[417] This led to an upsurge in violent actions, catalyzing even more the process of radicalization of the contending sides.

In an effort to free some of their detained comrades, for example, the ERP organized "Operation Roma," which consisted in the kidnapping of Roberto Poma, one of wealthiest men of the country who at the time was serving as Minister of Tourism. Poma was kidnapped in the morning of January 27, 1977 on the way to his office. In order to release him, the ERP demanded the liberation of Ana Guadalupe Martínez and Roberto Mariano Jiménez (who had been detained since 1976 and were being held in a clandestine center) and a ransom amount of $2.4 million. The government complied with the requests. On January 29, the two revolutionary leaders were released, given $5 thousand each, and put on a plane to Algeria. That same day, Roberto Poma's body was buried in the place where he had been held captive, as he had died of a serious wound inflicted the day of the kidnapping and that was never treated by the captors. The ERP collected the ransom, without revealing Poma's death nor the location of his body.[418]

[417] See Ana Guadalupe Martínez, *Las Carceles Clandestinas de El Salvador*, (San Salvador, ES: UCA Editores, 1993).
[418] Luis Escalante Arce, *Sacrificios Humanos*, 57-60. Poma's body was eventually found several days after the ordeal.

Just three months after "Operacion Roma," on April 19, the FPL carried another such action: the kidnapping Mauricio Borgonovo Pohl, who was serving as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This kidnapping was charged with meaning. Borgonovo Pohl was the country's Foreign Chancellor, and the nephew of Dr. Reynaldo Galindo Pohl, a by then historic public servant who had been a member of the Revolutionary Council that in 1948 replaced the last Hernández-Martínez faction, had served as President of the Legislative Assembly, as Minister of Culture and Popular Education, and at the time in question, was the country's Ambassador to the UN. By abducting Borgonovo Pohl the revolutionaries were challenging the traditional centers of power that, as they had reasoned, had to be destroyed.

The demands that the FPL presented for the release of Borgonovo Pohl were the liberation of 37 comrades who had been detained by the security forces. This time, however, the government did not give in. Instead, President Molina broadcasted through radio and television a message to the general population and to the leaders of the FPL. He stated that, as demonstrated with the Poma case, complying with the revolutionaries' demands would not guarantee the life of the Minister, and that doing so would open the doors for kidnapping to become an everyday occurrence. He accused the guerrilla groups to have started since 1971 (a clear allusion to the Regalado case) a campaign of violence that aimed to destroy the progress the nation had accomplished; he warned the FPL that justice would be hard on them if Borgonovo did not survive. The reply was sadistic. As a response to Borgonovo's mother, who had repeatedly pleaded for her son's life through various media outlets, the captors waited until May 10—Mother's day in El Salvador—

when they proceeded to assassinate him and to dump his body in a ditch on the outskirts of the capital city.[419]

The cases of abduction and assassination eventually became the source of enormous pressure for the government, particularly after they started to claim the lives of foreign business executives and diplomats like Japanese textile-industry investor Fujio Matsumoto, Swiss insurance executive Hugo Wey, and South Africa's Ambassador Archibald Gardner Dunn, among many others.

The economic elites began on their part, through their paramilitary groups, to retaliate by ordering the assassinations of known left wing activists as well as other public figures known to support positions contrary to their interests. The morning after Borgonovo's body was found, for example, a paramilitary squad assassinated the young priest Alfonso Navarro. This was the second priest killed by civilian extermination groups. The first had been Rutilio Grande, who had been killed in March, just a couple of months after the Poma case.[420]

In the final years of the decade the country went into crisis. Violence was being utilized by the government's official forces, by the paramilitary organizations controlled by the private sector, by the guerrilla groups, and, increasingly, by workers organizations who were being repressed by the government's security apparatus in its quest to find and stop communist activists.

In 1977 the State completely lost its legitimacy in an unabashedly fraudulent presidential election that is nowadays remembered for its direct ballot box stuffing in

---

[419] Luis Escalante Arce, *Sacrificios Humanos*, 61-65.
[420] Waldo Chávez Velasco, *Lo que no Conté*, 157. Rutilio Grande was killed on March 12. According to Inocencio Alas, Grande was killed because of his role in organizing a group of cane sugar workers who, as protest, had burnt some sugar fields and bales of cane bagasse, causing important economic losses to the San Francisco sugar mill. See José Inocencio Alas, *Iglesia, Tierra y Lucha*, 152.

favor of the official party and for the rejection and expulsion from polling places of election officials that represented the opposition. The new president, General Carlos Humberto Romero, was an ultra-conservative officer. He had received the support of the conservative elites, who coerced Molina into designating him as the next candidate of the official party. [421] As their unconditional ally, he embarked on a communist persecution campaign that steered the country towards a larger conflict.

The first major measure that Romero took after assuming power on July 1, was to declare a state of emergency that lasted thirty days. The second was to pass a decree known as the Ley de Defensa y Garantía del Orden Público (Law of Defense and Public Order Guarantee). The law turned into a major crime any attempt at sedition or rebellion against the government, and into a criminal anyone who supported or facilitated in any way those acts, which were considered efforts to impose foreign and totalitarian doctrines.[422] The popular opinion about the law was, however, that it was a "license to kill" the government had granted to its security forces.

With the arrival of General Romero to power the country went into an even faster downward spiral of violence between the various groups that represented two contending forces: those who wanted a radical transformation of the social structures, and those for whom the only solution was the physical elimination of the radical reformers. El Salvador by this time, had reached a perilous predicament: it was quickly paving the way for a large-scale civil conflict, and it had certainly lost its place as "the bright spot of Central America."

[421] See Waldo Chavez Velasco, *Lo que no Conté*, 204-206.
[422] Poder Legislativo, Decreto No. 407, "Ley de Defensa y Garantía del Orden Público," *Diario Oficial*, 257, no. 219 (Noviembre 25, 1977): 2.

Chapter Conclusion

The 1970s was a complex decade for El Salvador. While the country still experienced important economic and socially oriented improvement projects, the trend of political development declined and was replaced by growing polarization between the various sectors that wanted to reform the country and the conservative economic elites. This polarization led to a crisis that, by the end of the decade, relegated the socioeconomic projects to a secondary plane and set as priority the political confrontation that eventually led the country to civil war.

The major socioeconomic projects that were carried out during this period and that, despite the growing political breakdown, were meaningful for the nation were the expansion of industrial production aimed at reaching markets beyond Central America, and work towards the improvement of the local market. The search for larger markets resulted in a renewed influx of foreign investment capital that established many export-oriented manufacturing plants and that helped the economy attain a remarkable recovery from the decline caused by the withdrawal of Honduras from the Central American Common Market.

The expansion of the internal market brought significant improvements in the economy of the working classes as it provided the means to increase their purchase power and to embrace the emerging consumer culture. A better income distribution was attained through an increment of minimum wages, through the expansion of employment opportunities at the various economic infrastructure projects and the services establishments that were catering a burgeoning tourism industry, and through the creation

of credit granting institutions that, for the first time, offered financing opportunities to the common people who wished to start up a small or even a micro-business.

In terms of strictly social improvement projects, in this decade more common Salvadorans were able to escalate the social ladder through home ownership after the creation of the Social Housing Fund Program, a program that facilitated the acquisition of a housing unit through a payment program formed by contributions of the government, the employee, and the worker. The other major social project that was planned during this decade was an agrarian reform program. Nevertheless, the strong opposition to the project posed by the economic elites not only led to the cancelation of the project, but also fueled the polarization that the nation was experiencing at that time.

The socioeconomic improvements, however, were made under the shadow of a deceitful electoral process aimed at preventing a potential radical reformer from occupying the executive office. The military used dishonest technicalities to keep its party in power and thus the legitimacy of the State was not strong in the eyes of various sectors of the population. This strain was aggravated by the growth in organizations that sought changes in the country's economic infrastructure through more radical measures. The teacher's union, the higher education students, and many priests of the Catholic Church started to actively work, in different ways, towards the desired change—the re-distribution of land as the main demand. The confrontation that resulted between the radical revolutionary organizations and the conservative sectors led to a series of violent actions—kidnapping and assassinations—from both the revolutionary and the conservative sides that led the State to revert to its old role of keeper of internal order and defender from external threats. In its quest to stop the advance of the "international

communist and totalitarian doctrine," the State completely lost its legitimacy and resorted to the use of extreme force to maintain order, a situation that quickly positioned the country into the path towards civil war.

Conclusion

In this study I have re-examined the history of El Salvador from 1948 to 1978. My thesis holds that this was a period of socioeconomic prosperity distinct from previous and posterior years but that has, nevertheless, been understudied and ignored in a narrative about a continuous history of oppression and underdevelopment happening since the late 19th century until the people finally rebelled in the civil war of the 1980s. I have supported my argument by revisiting many sources that show how during these thirty years the government and the private sector, engaged in a process that transformed the politics, the economy, and the social aspects of the country.

The sources from the decade of the 1950s have shown that from 1948 onwards the government, with the help of a progressive civilian sector, engaged in a quest to overhaul the nation. The first major transformation was the creation of the Constitution of 1950, which changed the role of the State from keeper of order and defender of foreign threats into a facilitator of the socioeconomic well-being of the citizens. The new supreme law of the nation enacted universal suffrage for the first time, freedom of political organization, and provided the basis for social programs such as compulsory education, healthcare, and workers' rights. The Constitution of 1950 ushered a new era marked by political stability, improvements in the economy, and a dawning of social consciousness.

The economic foundations laid in these years began with the construction of infrastructure aimed to the diversification of the economic activities. The projects included the country's first hydroelectric dam, the expansion of the paved highway network, and the construction of a modern port capable of receiving large commercial vessels. This basic infrastructure allowed for cotton production to increase and become

the second agricultural export of importance, and for the formation of a small but burgeoning light industry sector that by the end of the decade was producing food, textiles, cement, and small metal products. Another important foundation set during this decade was the development of a regional economic integration project among the five Central American Republics. The project, which was proposed by the government of El Salvador, became a reality in 1960 and was known as the Central American Common Market.

The social foundations set in this decade were also unprecedented. Laborers were free to organize in trade unions, a social insurance program for public and private employees was founded by the government, public hospitals and health centers were built throughout the nation, a campaign to eradicate malaria helped reduce the incidence of the endemic disease in the coast, housing programs that offered the chance for home ownership to the urban and rural working classes were created, and all levels of education received unprecedented support from the government—leading to the increase in the number of basic education students and to the construction of the first formal campus of the National University, among other things.

All these projects were designed and set into motion in a careful and organized manner under the guidance of international organizations and programs such as the Point Four Program and the UN Technical Assistance Programme, which at the time were offering their aid to developing countries. They were all also unprecedented in nature because they sought to start changing the lives of the majority of the population, at the time still disenfranchised from participation in the political and economic life of the nation.

While the decade of the 1950s was the time for setting foundations, the 1960s was the time when the country built on those foundations and attained far reaching developments in its economy, politics, and social aspects. A variety of statistical sources demonstrate how the Central American Common Market served as a catalyst for the growth in the industrial production of El Salvador, which helped turn the strictly agricultural nation into the top exporter of textiles, shoes and clothing, chemicals, paper products, and metalworking products within Central America. In addition to the unprecedented growth in industrial activities, the country's agriculture diversified even more, adding sugar cane, corn, and even rice as export products.

The changes in the political arena during this new decade began with the creation of a strong opposition party—the Christian Democratic Party—which represented the interests of the until-then disenfranchised sectors: the middle classes, the urban workers, and the peasants. This party, as the voter turnout shows, was the first to really pose a challenge to the official party of the military, and its activity served to put pressure on the government to initiate further reforms that brought more political participation by the people and more power of representation to the opposition. The second major change in the politics was the introduction of a system of proportional representation to the Legislative Assembly. This measure completely revamped the manner in which deputies were elected, as it, for the first time allowed the opposition to obtain seats according to the percentage of votes each party received.

These two changes boosted the participation of the general population in political activities as well as in labor movements that sought to demand their rights. This was

evidenced in the last there years of the decade when the country saw an upsurge in labor strikes that at one point involved virtually all sectors where workers were unionized.

The major social projects that took place in the 1960s included the creation of a labor code that gave workers the official tools to defend their rights, the establishment of measures and institutions that looked after the improvement of nutrition of the working classes, the creation of the National Home Financing Agency which facilitated mortgage loans for workers, and the education reforms that modernized the university and the primary and secondary levels with the goal of creating a skilled labor force that would strengthen the increasingly diversifying economic activities.

These changes led to a re-composition of society. The middle income sectors experienced great expansion and the general population attained more ability to negotiate improvements in their life conditions with the political and economic powers. These reshaped social sectors also adopted cultural tastes that reflected their hunger for modernity, even if it was at the expense of their own cultural roots. American popular culture became the model to follow, and rock 'n roll the music of the youth of the cities as well as of rural towns.

In addition to the many quantitative sources that demonstrate the boom in economic and social activities that took place during this decade, in Chapter 3 I also revisited sources that provide for qualitative analyses that lead to the visualization of an unthinkable portrait of the country: that of a "most progressive nation," a "bright spot" in the Central American area, and "an exemplary developing economy." This type of language to refer to El Salvador, I have shown, was commonly found in popular as well as specialized publications. Sources like the *Washington Post*, the *World Affairs* journal

and others portrayed the county in a very positive way and demonstrate that international conceptions about it have not always focused on underdevelopment, poverty and oppression.

Although the 1970s was the decade when the climate of political stability that had been maintained in the previous two decades experienced a sharp decline, there were still various economic and social projects that were significant in the lives of many Salvadorans. The economic statistics show how the efforts of the government and the private sector to rescue the economy from the decline caused by the rupture of the Common Market in 1969 not only worked but resulted in an extraordinary growth pattern that led the country to achieve its highest GDP per capita of the century in 1978. This feat was achieved after the government ushered the industrial sector to look for markets beyond Central America and to expand the internal market through the improvement of the purchase power of the working classes. The employment opportunities were expanded through the further development of the industrial sector, the construction of more economic infrastructure and public works, and the expansion of the services that aimed to cater to the emerging tourism industry.

During this decade Salvadorans saw two manifestations of the country's drive/desire for modernization. The first one was the performance of the Salvadoran engineers at the production plant of Texas Instruments, the American manufacturer of electronic components that arrived to the country in 1973. The inventive spirit of the Salvadoran workers led a group of them to create a device that greatly improved the production process and that received an unequivocal Salvadoran name: "El Torito Pinto." The second manifestation was the development of the first and only "Salvadoran" pickup

truck, el “Cherito” or “little friend.” This was a project aimed directly at improving the economy of the less privileged farmers or business entrepreneurs for whom an affordable means of merchandise-transportation was life-changing.

The economic improvement projects overlapped or were supplemented with other projects that were social in nature but that were executed with the overall goal of improving the internal market. These were the creation of more State and private financing institutions that, for the first time, offered lines of credit for the creation of small and even micro businesses. Small farmers who had never had access to a loan were able to obtain one to purchase, for example, a Cherito or another similar vehicle to transport their products to the market by themselves and obtain better profits. Many housewives, also, were able to obtain a credit to buy a sewing machine and start manufacturing garments at home.

The major social program that the government had in mind during this decade, however, was an agrarian reform project, whose goal was to bring some justice to the rural population by re-distributing the country’s main means of production, the land. The project, nevertheless, was canceled by the government after the opposing economic elites imposed their will.

The political downfall that El Salvador experienced in the 1970s began early in the decade when the party of the military manipulated the elections process of 1972 with the sole goal of making sure that the opposition candidate—who was proposing a radical agrarian reform—would not win. This action undermined the legitimacy of the State, and the situation aggravated as the decade unfolded. The disagreements between the teachers’ union and the Ministry of Education and the overall climate of protest movements within

the centers of higher education that was happening since the late 1960s developed in the foundation of the first groups that saw armed struggle as the only solution to reconfigure the nation: the FPL and the ERP. The radical actions that these two organizations carried out from 1971 onwards had enormous impact in the hardening of the position of the State against revolutionary movements and led to the organization of far-right private paramilitary groups that confronted and avenged the guerrillas' own violent actions. By 1977, the executive office was occupied by an ultra-conservative military officer who declared state of emergency and reverted the role of the government to its pre-1948 state of keeper of social order. Violence became the order of the day and the road towards an inevitable civil war was paved.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge about El Salvador by providing a perspective that is not found in the dominant academic narratives, which focus on finding explanations and origins of the civil war of the 1980s. The focus of this study, instead, has been on finding sources that attest to the existence of a period of time during which El Salvador experienced political development and stability and socio-economic improvements. This perspective is important and much needed since the country is mostly portrayed through a perspective based on factors that, although are undeniably true (oppression and underdevelopment), are not the only ones through which the small nation could be examined. This study has shown that there are under-explored factors that could help diversify the portraits of El Salvador.

While not intending to defend any of the historical actors of the studied period, in this study I challenge some of the premises held by many of the works that form the academic body of knowledge on El Salvador. One of those premises is that the military

has always been the country's main obstacle for change. The problem I see with that perspective is that "the military" has never been a single entity holding a homogeneous political thought. There were conservative as well as progressive factions. The five heads of State of the studied period—although unapologetically anti-communists—however, proved with concrete actions to be progressive and significant agents of economic, social, and political change. The overwhelming obstacle for reforms was posed, instead, by the conservative economic elites.

A major limitation of this study is that it encompasses a relatively long period of time, and thus it does not cover with enough detail many of the projects that were carried out during the period in question. This opens the door for future studies to be conducted about shorter periods or about specific subjects. Each of these decades offers a wonderful opportunity for further exploration of the political as well as the cultural history of El Salvador. The decade of the 1950s, for example, offer the opportunity to rediscover, among other things, the history of the most emblematic recreation centers of the country (the waterparks and the observation sites created during the administration of Osorio), as well as the history of some of the—arguably—most progressive public servants in its history: Oscar Osorio and Reynaldo Galindo Pohl. Osorio's efficient administration, personal honesty, and influence on subsequent leaders, for example, has been recognized in various types of publications.[423]

[423] The leaders that followed him—although not all are held in the same high esteem—have never been directly accused of dishonesty in their administrations or of taking advantage of their position to enrich themselves. Lemus (perhaps the most criticized) left the country after the coup to live in exile in Costa Rica for the remainder of his life. Rivera Carballo made his living through a diplomatic post in Washington to which he was assigned immediately after his term. He died of a heart attack at age 51 in 1973. Sánchez Hernández and Molina lived quiet middle class lives after they served their terms. Molina moved to Los Angeles in the 1980s but returned to the country when the war ended. In sum, there is no documentation, news reports, opinion pieces or other sources linking the five presidents of the studied period to acts of economic corruption for personal gain.

An in-depth study of his and the subsequent four administrations could lead to findings that would show a completely different facet of the leaders of these times, who are usually regarded in the worst terms. It would probably highlight how distinct/unique this period of time was in terms of honesty/corruption in public administration when compared to the post-war period—plagued by presidents who enriched themselves by directly stealing public funds.

The decade of the 1960s also offers the opportunity to explore the life of Julio Adalberto Rivera who, according to José Inocencio Alas, was willing to support the left leaning university officials during the 1964 secession ordeal because he had been exposed to Marxist ideology while studying at the Livorno Naval Academy in Italy. The populist side of his government is fascinating because he was very successful at establishing a connection with the masses, and yet—like the other four leaders—did not rely on mass mobilization but on the electoral process for support of his party/measures. According to various sources he used to ride a Harley Davidson every Sunday, without any security escorts, to the Flor Blanca Stadium, where he sat in the bleachers section among the common population—wearing a straw hat—to watch the soccer match.

Another subject that offers the opportunity for development is the popular culture expressions. The history of music of El Salvador is an under-studied theme that represents a rich mine to be exploited and that could well lead to a study called "Refried Beatles. The Curious Case of the Salvadoran Counterculture,"—honoring the work of Eric Zolov. Finally, for the decade of the 1970s, the findings of this study suggest that the origins of the civil war of the 1980s could be found in the immediate preceding years instead of in the 1930s as it is often stated. It was in the last half of the 1970s when El

Salvador had a population that had taken some initial steps in democratic practices, that had had a taste of the emergent consumer culture, that had developed a social consciousness, and that was, thus, in a disposition to fight in order to keep or to recover their rights.

In sum, this study has demonstrated that the period 1948 to 1978 has characteristics that make it distinct enough so as not to be lumped with the rest of the country's history that speaks of underdevelopment, poverty, and oppression of the people. It was a period during which the country experienced major reforms that brought significant improvements to all social classes—reforms that made the country worthy of the nowadays unconceivable label of "bright spot of Central America."

Bibliography

Archives and Libraries

Archivo General de la Nación de El Salvador

Banco Central de Reserva de El Salvador. Museo y Biblioteca Luis Alfaro Durán

Biblioteca Central, Universidad de El Salvador

Biblioteca Florentino Idoate, Universidad Centroamericana

Biblioteca Nacional de El Salvador

Biblioteca Rafael Meza Ayau, Universidad Don Bosco

Casa de las Academias de la Lengua y la Historia de El Salvador

Digital Archives

Archivo Digital del Diario Oficial de El Salvador

Digital Repository. Economic Comission for Latin America and the Caribbean

REDICCES Repositorio Digital de Ciencia y Cultura de El Salvador

Repositorio Institucional de la Universidad de El Salvador

Revista de la Universidad de México. Archivo

The World Bank. Research and Publications

UNESCO Archives—UNESCO Digital Library

United Nations Digital Library

USAID Development Data Library

Periodicals

Chicago Tribune

El Diario de Hoy

El Diario Oficial

La Prensa Grafica

Los Angeles Times

New York Times

Washington Post

Interviews

Escobar, Irma. El Salvador.

Castro, Lorenzo. El Salvador.

Iraheta, Julio Antonio. El Salvador.

Quijada Laínez, Pedro. Minnesota.

Reyes, José Dagoberto. Los Angeles.

Rodriguez, Teresa. Los Angeles.

Published Primary Sources

ANDA, *Boletín Estadístico no 1. Año 1979.* San Salvador, ES: ANDA. Unidad Estadística. 1979.

Anuario Estadístico. 1950-1951. San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1952.

Anuario Estadístico. 1960. San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1962.

Anuario Estadístico. 1970. San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1971.

Agriculture and Trade of El Salvador. Washington, DC: US Department of Agriculture, 1971.

"Alimentación y Riqueza Para los Salvadoreños. Cooperativa de Pescadores, Garantía Económica Para la Patria." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1955.

Aquí El Salvador. Síntesis de un Pueblo en Constante Progreso. San Salvador, ES: Departamento de Relaciones Públicas. Casa Presidencial, 1966.

Argumedo, Carlos Alberto. "Paraiso Tropical Para Obreros." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Abril 14, 1955.

Barrett, Maude T. *Social Welfare Programmes. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador.* New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954.

"Becados en el Exterior." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1951.

Blutstein, Howard I., Elinor C. Betters, John Cobb Jr., Jonathan A. Leonard, and Charles M. Townsend. *Area Handbook for El Salvador.* Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1971.

Boletín Estadístico. II Epoca no. 3. San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1952.

Boletín Estadístico. II Epoca no. 5. San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1952.

Boletín Estadístico. II Epoca no. 16. San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1954.

Boletín Estadístico II Epoca no. 23. San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1955.

Boletín Estadístico. II Epoca no. 60. San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1963.

Boletín Estadístico.II Epoca no. 84. San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1969.

Boletín Estadístico.II Epoca no. 85. San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1970.

Broadcasting Stations of the World. Washington, DC: Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 1971.

Buenas Epocas. La Nueva Ola de El Salvador. Directed by Mario Anaya. MAR Works, 2010. 1 hr., 43 min. DVD.

Busey, James L. "The Presidents of Costa Rica," *The Americas* 18:1 (1961):55-70.

Carpio, Salvador Cayetano. *La Huelga General Obrera de Abril. El Salvador.* San Salvador, ES: Editorial Farabundo Martí, 1981.

Centroamérica. Integración económica y su Mercado Común. 1951-1967. San Salvador, ES: Publicidad Integrada Centroamericana, 1967.

Christey, Leroy S., and Charles B. Wade. *Los Recursos Comerciales Pesqueros de El Salvador. Reporte Preliminar. 1952.* San Salvador, ES: Ministerio de Economía, 1959.

Clarke, John H. *Inland Transport in El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador.* New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954.

"Colonias Rurales Para el Obrero Campesino." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Agosto 14, 1952.

"Construcción de Casas Para Familias Pobres." *Informaciones de El Salvador*, September 14, 1950.

Conway, H. McKinley. "El Salvador: A Bright Spot in Central America." *Industrial Development*, June 1963.

Cuarto Censo Nacional de Población 1971. Volumen I. San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1974.

Cuarto Censo Nacional de Población 1971. Volumen II. San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1974.

Cuzan, Alfred Gonzalez. "Centralization and Scope: Political Structure and Policy Performance in Costa Rica and El Salvador." PhD diss., Indiana University, 1975.

Dada, Héctor. *La Economía de El Salvador y la Integración Centroamericana.* San Salvador, ES: UCA Editores, 1978.

"Diez y Ocho Millones de Libras de Pescado Puede dar la Industria Pesquera Salvadoreña." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14,1952.

"El Consejo de Gobierno y el Magisterio Nacional." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Agosto 14, 1950.

"El Conservatorio Nacional de Música al Servicio del Pueblo." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1953.

"El Insitituto de Vivienda Urbana Continua Facilitando Hogares Comfortables a Obreros." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Abril 14, 1955.

"El Programa de Bienestar Rural. Realidad Beneficiosa Para el Campesino." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1955.

El Salvador Election Factbook. Washington, DC: Operations and Policy Research Inc., 1967.

"El Salvador se Industrializa. El Cemento es ya un Producto Nacional." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Febrero 14, 1953.

"El Salvador. Un Rincón Turístico de Centro America." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Febrero 14, 1953.

El Salvador. Zonificación Agrícola. Fase I. Washington: OAS, 1974.

El Salvador. Zonificación Agrícola. Fase II. Washington: OAS, 1977.

"Elocuentes Discursos al Inaugurarse la Primera Cooperativa de Pescadores en el Puerto de Acajutla." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Julio 14,1951.

"Escuela Nacional de Agricultura ha Sido Inaugurada en El Salvador." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1956.

Feuerlein, W.J. *Proposals for the Further Development of El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador.* New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954.

———. "Economic Progress in El Salvador." *World Affairs* 120:3 (1957): 68-71.

"Firmase Acuerdo Sobre Concesión de Becas Entre los Gobiernos de Estados Unidos y El Salvador." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Julio 14, 1951.

Fisher, Anna M. "Nursing in El Salvador." *The American Journal of Nursing* 55:6 (1955): 682-684.

Flores Macal, Mario. "El Movimiento Sindical Salvadoreño. Características Principales." *Anuario de Estudios Centroamericanos,* 6 (1980): 17-24.

"Formación y Capacitación del Profesorado." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Noviembre 14, 1953.

Gardiner, Harvey. "The Japanese in Central America." *Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs* 14:1 (1972): 15-47.

Gómez Arévalo, Amaral Palevi. "Una Genealogía de la Educación en El Salvador." *Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Educativos* 41:3-4 (2011): 73-117.

Guillén, Carlos. *Labor Institutes in El Salvador.* Washington, DC: Inter-American Economic and Social Council, Pan American Union, 1957.

Haggerty, Richard A., and Library of Congress. Federal Research Division. *El Salvador: A Country Study.* Washington, DC: The Division, 1990.

Harrison, Sandas Lorenzo. "The Role of El Salvador in the Drive for Unity in Central America." PhD diss., Indiana University, 1962.

Hornik, Robert C., Henry T. Ingle, John K Mayo, Emile G. McAnany, and Wilbur Schramm. *Television and Educational Reform in El Savlador.* Stanford, CA: Institute for Communication Research, Stanford University, on behalf of the Academy for Educational Development, under contract with the U.S. Agency for International Development, 1973.

Hoselitz, Bert F. *Industrial Development in El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador.* New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954.

"Inaugurado el Hospital de Maternidad." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Diciembre 14, 1953.

Inter-American Development Development Bank. Activities, 1961-1968. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 1969.

———. Social Progress Trust Fund Second Annual Report, 1962. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 1963.

———. Social Progress Trust Fund Fifth Annual Report, 1965. Washington, DC: Inter-American Development Bank, 1966.

Kelly, Henry Hagans. *Tourist Facilities on the Inter-American Highway.* Washington, DC: International Cooperation Administration, 1960.

Kilgo, Reese Danley. "The Development of Education in El Salvador." PhD diss., The University of Texas Austin, 1966.

"La Obra Cultural de la República." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Octubre 14, 1952.

"La Pausa del Café." *El Café de El Salvador,* Mayo 27, 1959.

"La Politica Comercial de El Salvador." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1952.

"La Revolución Cumple con el Campesinado." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Julio 14, 1956.

"Las Comunidades Rurales. Ayer un Ensayo Hoy Una Realidad." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Diciembre 14, 1954.

López, Carlos Roberto. *Industrialización y Urbanización en El Salvador 1969-1979.* San Salvador, ES: UCA-Editores, 1984.

Los Hermanos Flores, band. *La Fiesta.* Ambiente AMD 23, 1972.

Los Supertwisters, band, *What'd I Say*. DCA/S 1003, 1963. 45 rpm

Luna, David. "Análisis de Una Dictadura Facista Latinoamericana. Maximiliano H. Martínez 1931-1944." *La Universidad. Organo Científico-Sociocultural de la Universidad de El Salvador* 5 (1969): 39-130.

Martínez, Carlos E. "Historia de la Facultad de Ingeniería y Arquitectura de la Universidad de El Salvador durante los Años 1935-1936." *La Universidad. Organo Científico-Sociocultural de la Universidad de El Salvador. Nueva Epoca* 5 (2009): 127-157.

Martínez González, José Antonio. "Historia del Cine en El Salvador." BA thesis, Universidad de El Salvador, 2013.

Mason, John, and Jesse Hobbs. "Estudios Experimentales Sobre la Malaria en una Zona de Elevada Incidencia del Litoral de El Salvador." *Boletín de la Oficina Sanitaria Panamericana* 84: 1 (1978): 50-64.

Mayo, John K., Robert C. Hornik, and Emile G. McAnany. *Educational Reform with Television. The El Salvador Experience.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976.

McDonald, Ronald H. "Electoral Behavior and Political Development in El Salvador." *The Journal of Politics* 31:2 (1969): 397-419.

Menjivar, Rafael. *Formación y Lucha del Proletariado Industrial Salvadoreño.* San Salvador, ES: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1982.

Memoria de las actividades realizadas por la Administración Nacional de Acueductos y Alcantarillados, ANDA 1967. San Salvador, ES: ANDA, 1967.

Minkel, Clarence W. "Programs of Agricultural Colonization and Settlement in Central America." *Revista Geográfica* 66 (1967): 19-53.

Monroy, Daniel Enrique, Francisco Schmidt, Luis Alberto Gómez Chávez, and Julio Ernesto Contreras. *Cien años de Presencia Evangélica en El Salvador. 1896-1996.* San Salvador, ES: Confraternidad Evangelica Salvadoreña, 1996.

Naciones Unidas, Comisión Económica para America Latina. Características principales del proceso y de la política de industrialización de Centroamérica, 1970 a 1979. Mexico, DF: CEPAL, 1979.

———. El Salvador: Notas Para el Estudio Económico de America Latina, 1977. Mexico, DF: CEPAL, 1978.

Nakagawa, Tsuyoshi. *El Salvador.* Tokyo, JP: Kodansha International LTD, 1975.

Nohlen, Dieter. *Elections in the Americas. A Data Handbook. Volume 1: North America, Central America, and the Caribbean.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005.

"Obra de Grandes Alcances Para el Porvenir es el Instituto de Educación Técnica." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre 14, 1956.

Organización Mundial de la Salud. Segundo Informe Sobre la Situación Sanitaria Mundial 1957-1960. Ginebra: OMS, 1963.

Orquesta ANTEL, band. A*NTEL Vol. IV*. Boni Discos, 33½ rpm.

Ortiz, Ricardo M. *The Harbor System of El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador.* New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954.

Pachano, Wilson Garces. *Estudio Sobre la Vivienda en El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador.* New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954.

Palacious, Aristides. "El Salvador's Tropical Institute." *Science. New Series* 127, no 3301 (1958): 746.

Paredes, Juan Allwood. "Informe de El Salvador Sobre los Progresos Realizados en su Programa de Erradicación del Paludismo," *Informes Sobre los Programas de Erradicación de la Malaria en las Americas.* Washington, DC: Organización Sanitaria Panamericana, 1955.

Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social 1973-1977. San Salvador, ES: CONAPLAN, 1972.

Política de Transformación Agraria del Presidente Molina. San Salvador, ES: Ministerio de Agricultura y Ganadería. Departamento de Información Agropecuaria, 1975.

Primer Festival de Música Juvenil de El Salvador. DIC/S 1021, 1969. 33 ½ rpm.

"Primer Instituto de Previsión y Seguridad Social en El Salvador." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Septiembre, 14, 1953.

"Principios y Objetivos del Consejo de Gobierno Revolucionario." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Agosto 14, 1950.

Raynolds, David. *Rapid Development in Small Economies: The Example of El Salvador*. New York, NY: Praeger Publishers, 1967.

"Reparto de Tierras." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Junio 14, 1951.

Rivera, Julio A. *Mensaje del Teniente Coronel Julio A. Rivera al Pueblo Salvadoreño al Tomar Posesión de la Presidencia de la República.* San Salvador, ES: Secretaría Información de la Presidencia de la Republica de El Salvador, 1962.

Ruíz Paniagua, Javier. *La Educación Normal en El Salvador.* Guatemala, GT: Instituto de Investigaciones y Mejoramiento Educativo. Universidad de San Carlos & Michigan State University, 1965.

Satterwaite, Ridgway. "Campesino Agriculture and Hacienda Modernization in Coastal El Salvador: 1949-1969." PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971.

Schramm, Wilbur. *Instructional Television in the Educational Reform of El Salvador.* Washington, DC: Information Center on Instructional Technology, 1973.

———. *Educational Television in El Salvador.* Washington, DC: Agency for International Development, 1970.

Schill, Gary David. "A Place to Live: Middle Class Housing in San Salvador, El Salvador." PhD diss., University of Oregon, 1973.

Smith, Robert S. "Population and Economic Growth in Central America." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 10:2 (1962): 134-149.

Spencer, David. *Armored Fighting Vehicles of El Salvador.* Darlington, MD: Darlington Productions, Inc., 1995.

"Tarjeta Para el Turismo Creada en El Salvador." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Junio 14, 1955.

Tercer Censo Nacional de Población 1961. San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1965.

Thompson, John. "The Fisheries Industries of El Salvador." *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 3:3 (1961): 436-446.

Thorning, Joseth F. "Costa Rica: A Rural Democracy," *World Affairs* 108:3 (1945):171-180.

"Tratado de Libre Comercio Entre las Repúblicas de El Salvador y Nicaragua." *Informaciones de El Salvador,* Abril 14, 1951.

Turner, George. *Un análisis de la Economía de El Salvador.* Tranlated by Oscar René Lindo. Los Angeles, CA: Publicado por George P. Turner, 1961.

Trigueros, Alvaro. "El crecimiento económico en El Salvador de 1950 a 1996." *Realidad. Revista de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades* 61 (1998): 33-44.

UNESCO. Education for Progress: El Salvador. EFM/49. Paris, FR: UNESCO, 1972.

———. International Yearbook of Education 22. Paris, FR: UNESCO, 1961.

———. International Yearbook of Education 30. Paris, FR: UNESCO, 1969.

UNESCO and Bruno E. M. Stiglitz. El Salvador. Reforma Educativa. 2920/RMO.RD/ESM/IM/AT/ELSALED 11. Paris, FR: UNESCO, 1973.

USAID, *Report on the Health, Population, and Nutrition Activities of the Agency for International Development* (Washington, DC: U.S. Office of International Health, 1968): 213.

US Congress, *Central America: Some Observations on its Common Market, Binational Centers, and Housing Programs,* 89th Cong., 2d sess., House of Representatives, Subcommittee on Inter-American Affairs, Subcommittee Print 66-746, 3, Washington, DC, 1966.

US Department of State. "Agreement of a Cooperative Program for Agricultural Development Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Republic of El Salvador," *United States Treaties and Other International Agreements. Vol 5. Part 3.* Washington, DC, 1956.

———. US Department of State, *The Application of Point Four in El Salvador,* by Angier Biddle Duke, Bulletin 4783. Washington, DC, 1952.

US Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Labor Law and Practice in El Salvador,* BLS Report No. 280. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Labor, 1965.

Ventura, Edgar. "El acceso a la educación primaria y la reforma educativa salvadoreña (1960-1972)." *Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales* 6 (2014): 63-90.

Waibel, Leo. "White Settlement in Costa Rica." *Geographical Review* 29:4 (1939):529-560.

Wallich, Henry C., and John H. Adler. *Public Finance in a Developing Country: El Salvador, a Case Study.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1951.

Webre, Stephen. *José Napoleón Duarte and the Christian Democratic Party in Salvadoran Politics 1960-1972.* Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1979.

Wilford, W.T. “The Central American Common Market: Trade Patterns after a Decade of Union.” *Nebraska Journal of Economics and Business* 12:3 (1973): 3-22.

Wilford, W.T., and G. Christou. “A Sectoral Analysis of Disaggregated Trade Flows in the Central American Common Market 1962-1970.” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 12:2 (1973): 159-175.

Willie, Kathryn H. *Central America as a Market and Competitor for U.S. Agriculture.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1959.

Wilson, Curtis M. “El Salvador. A Geographic Reconnaissance.” *The Journal of Geography* 48 (1949): 177-196.

Woolley, Paul Oswald, C.A. Perry, and D.L. Larson. *Syncrisis: The Dynamics of Health. An Analytic Series on the Interactions of Health and Socioeconomic Development. V: El Salvador.* Washington: U.S. Office of International Health, 1972.

World Bank. Appraisal of a Second Education Project El Salvador. Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 1974.

———. Appraisal of the Power Expansion Program. Comision Ejecutiva Del Rio Lempa (CEL) El Salvador. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1963.

———. Appraisal of the Telephone Expansion Program. The National Telecommunications Administration (ANTEL) El Salvador. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1963.

———.Current Economic Situation and Prospects of El Salvador. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1958.

———. Economic Memorandum on El Salvador, 1979. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1979.

———. Report and Recommendation of the President to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Loan to Administracion Nacional de Telecomunicaciones With the Guarantee of El Salvador for a Second Telecommunications Project. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1972.

———. Report and Recommendation of the President to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Loan to Administracion Nacional de Telecomunicaciones With the Guarantee of El Salvador for a Third Telecommunications Project. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1978.

———. Report and Recommendation of the President to the Executive Directors on a Proposed Supplementary Loan to the Republic of El Salvador for the Revised Third Highway Project. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1967.

———. Situación y Perspectivas del Desarrollo Económico de El Salvador. Washington, DC: WorldBank Group, 1971.

———. "World Development Indicators. El Salvador. Life Expectancy at Birth, 1960." DataBank. Last modified March 7, 2020.

———. "World Development Indicators. El Salvador. Life Expectancy at Birth, 1970." DataBank. Last modified December 1, 2020.

World Bank and Robert G. Blayney. El Salvador Second Urban Project. Impact of Small-Scale Enterprise. Credit Program on Women Entrepreneurs. Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 1979.

Secondary Sources

1932, Cicatríz de la Memoria. Directed by Jeffrey L. Gould and Carlos Heríquez Consalvi. Icarus Films, 2002. 1 hr., 28 min. DVD.

Alas, José Inocencio. *Iglesia, Tierra y Lucha Campesina: Suchitoto, El Salvador, 1968-1977.* San Salvador: Algier's Impresores, 2003.

Almeida, Paul. *Waves of Protest. Popular Struggle in El Salvador, 1925-2005.* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Alvarenga Ventuolo, Patricia. *Cultura y Ética de la Violencia. El Salvador 1880-1932.* San José, CR: Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana, 1996.

Anderson, Thomas P. *Matanza, El Salvador's Communist Revolt of 1932.* Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1971.

—. *Matanza: The 1932 Slaughter That Traumatized a Nation, Shaping US-Salvadoran Policy to This Day*. Evanston, IL: Curbstone Books, 1992.

Argueta, Manlio. *One Day of Life.* New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1983.

Armstrong, Robert and Janet Shenk. *El Salvador. The Face of Revolution.* Boston, MA: South End Press, 1982.

Arriola, Francisco Joel. "Federación Cristiana de Campesinos Salvadoreños (FECCAS) y Unión de Trabajadores del Campo (UTC): La Formación del Movimiento Campesinos Salvadoreño Revisitada." *Diálogos, Revista de Historia de la Universidad de Costa Rica* 20, no.2 (2019):64-98.

Balinski, Michel L., and H. Peyton Young. *Fair Representation. Meeting the Ideal One Man, One Vote.* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982.

Baloyra, Enrique A. *El Salvador in Transition.* Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

Barraza Ibarra, Jorge. *Perspectivas y Tendencias del Turismo en El Salvador. 1930-2008.* San Salvador, ES: Universidad Gerardo Barrios Editores, 2011.

Barry, Tom, Deb Preusch, and Beth Wood. *Dollars and Dictators. A Guide to Central America.* Albuquerque, NM: Grove Press Inc., 1983.

Brockman, James R. *La Violencia del Amor.* Walden, NY: Plough Publishing House, 2001.

Byrne, Hugh. *El Salvador's Civil War.* Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1996.

Cammett, John M., *Antonio Gramsci and the Origins of Italian Communism.* Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967.

Chávez, Joaquín M. *Poets and Phrophets of the Resistance. Intellectuals & the Origins of El Salvador's Civil War.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017.

Chávez Velasco, Waldo. *Lo que no Conté Sobre los Presidentes Militares.* San Salvador, ES: Indole Editores, 2006.

Cheney, Glenn Alan. *El Salvador. Country in Crisis*. New York, NY: F. Watts, 1982.

Ching, Erik. *Authoritarian El Salvador: Politics and the Origins of the Military Regimes, 1880-1940.* Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2014.

Coronil, Fernando. *The Magical State: Nature, Money and Modernity in Venezuela*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997.

Danner, Mark. *The Massacre at El Mozote: a Parable of the Cold War.* New York, NY: Vintage, 1994.

Didion, Joan. *Salvador.* Toronto, Ont: Lester & Orpen Dennys, 1983.

Dunkerley, James. *Power in the Isthmus. A Political History of Central America.* New York, NY: Verso, 1988.

Escalante Arce, Luis. *Sacrificios Humanos Contra Derechos Humanos. Relato del Secuestro de un Banquero Salvadoreño.* San Salvador, ES: Edilit, 1991.

Estudio Diagnóstico Sobre el Consumo del Café en El Salvador. San Salvador, ES: Consejo Salvadoreño del Café, 2008.

Euraque. Dario A. *Reinterpreting the Banana Republic: Region and State in Honduras, 1870-1972I.* Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

González Huguet, Carmen, *Jimmy Hendrix Toca Mientras Cae la Lluvia.* San Salvador, ES: Editorial Rubén H. Dimas, 2004.

Gerefi, Gary, and Miguel Corzeniewicz. "Comodity Chains and Footwear Exports in the Semiperiphery." In *Semiperipheral States in the World Economy (Contributions in Economics and Economic History),* edited by William G. Martin, 45-68. New York, NY: Greenwood Press, 1990.

Haggard, Stephan. *Pathways from the Periphery: The Politics of Growth in the Newly Industrialized Countries.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990.

Hume, Mo. *The Politics of Violence. Gender, Conflict and Community in El Salvador.* Malden, MA: John Wiley & Sons, 2009.

Historia de El Salvador. Tomo II. San Salvador, ES: Ministerio de Educación. Comisión Nacional de Libros de Texto Gratuitos, 1994.

Lauria Santiago, Aldo. *An Agrarian Republic. Commercial Agriculture and the Politics of Peasant Communities in El Salvador, 1823-1914.* Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1999.

Lauria Santiago, Aldo, and Jeffrey L. Gould. *To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador, 1920-1932.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.

Lauria Santiago, Aldo, and Leigh Binford. *Landscapes of Struggle. Politics, Society and Community in El Salvador.* Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 2004.

Lindo-Fuentes, Héctor. *Weak Foundations: The Economy of El Salvador in the Nineteenth Century, 1821-1898.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991.

Lindo Fuentes, Héctor, and Erik Ching. *Modernizing Minds in El Salvador. Education Reform and the Cold War.* Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2012.

Lindo Fuentes, Héctor, Erik Ching, and Rafael Lara Martínez. *Remembering a Massacre in El Salvador: The Insurrection of 1932, Roque Dalton, and the Politics of Historical Memory.* Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2007.

Martínez, Ana Guadalupe. *Las Carceles Clandestinas de El Salvador.* San Salvador, ES: UCA Editores, 1993.

Mainwaring, Scott, and Timothy R. Scully, eds. *Christian Democracy in Latin America. Electoral Competition and Regime Conflicts.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003.

Montgomery, Tommie S. *Revolution in El Salvador: Origins and Evolution*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1982.

Peterson, Anna L. *Martyrdom and the Politics of Religion.* Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997.

Rosenberg, Joseph. *Death Merchant# 55. Slaughter in El Salvador*. New York, NY: Pinnacle Books, 1983.

Stathis, Kalyvas N. *The Rise of Christian Democracy in Europe.* New York, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996.

Talbot, John M. "The Struggle for Control of a Commodity Chain: Instant Coffee from Latin America." *Latin American Research Review* 32:2 (1997): 117-135.

Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the Past. Power and the Production of History*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995.

Vargas Méndez, Jorge. *Para Oirte y Mirarte Mejor. La Industria Radial y Televisiva en El Salvador 1926-2000.* San Salvador, ES: ASDER, 2000.

Ward, Thomas. *Gangsters Without Borders: an Ethnography of a Salvadoran Street Gang.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Whitfield, Teresa. *Paying the Price: Ignacio Ellacuría and the Murdered Jesuits of El Salvador.* Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1994.

Williams, Phillip, and Knut Walter. *Militarization and Demilitarization in El Salvador's Transition to Democracy.* Pittsburg, PA: University of Pittsburg Press, 1997.

Zolov, Eric. *Refried Elvis. The Rise of the Mexican Counterculture.* Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999.

Appendices

Appendix 1. El Salvador, Country Profile
Basic Figures, 1952

El Salvador. Profile. 1952	
Population	1,800,000
Population density	88.9/square kilometer
Population growth rate	3 % per year
Economically active population	653,409
GDP per capita	$175
Literacy rate	12.7 %
Life expectancy	40 years

Sources: *Boletín Estadístico. II Epoca* no. 3, (San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1952):31., W.J. Feuerlein, *Proposals for the Further Development of El Salvador. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador* (New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954), 11-13., and Maude T. Barrett, *Social Welfare Programmes. Prepared for the Government of El Salvador* (New York, NY: United Technical Assistance Programme, 1954),1.

Appendix 2. El Salvador, Country Profile
Basic Figures for 1961 and Rate of Change from Previous Decade

El Salvador. Profile. 1961		Rate of change from previous decade
Population	2,510,984	39%
Population density	126/square kilometer	41.7 %
Population growth rate	3 % per year	0
Economically active population	807,092	23.5%
GDP per capita	$192	9.7 %
Literacy rate	51 %	301.5%
Life expectancy	50 years	25%

Sources: *Tercer Censo Nacional de Población 1961*, (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1965): XXIII- XXIX, 1., James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus. A Political History of Central America* (New York, NY: Verso, 1988), 175., and "World Development Indicators. El Salvador. Life Expectancy at Birth, 1960," World Bank. Databank, accessed March 7, 2020, https://databank.worldbank.org/source/world-development-indicators/preview/on.

Appendix 3. El Salvador, Country Profile
Basic Figures for 1971 and Rate of Change from Previous Decade

El Salvador. Profile. 1971		Rate of change from previous decade
Population	3,544,648	41.1%
Population density	169/square kilometer	34.1%
Population growth rate	3.4 % per year	0.4%
Economically active population	1,666,479	106.4%
GDP per capita	$256	33.3%
Literacy rate	59 %	15%
Life expectancy	55 years	10%

Sources: *Cuarto Censo Nacional de Población 1971. Volumen I.* (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1974): XXI-XXIX., James Dunkerley, *Power in the Isthmus. A Political History of Central America* (New York, NY: Verso, 1988), 175., *Cuarto Censo Nacional de Población 1971. Volumen II.* (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1974): XXII-XXVII, and "World Development Indicators. El Salvador. Life Expectancy at Birth, 1970," World Bank. DataBank, accessed December 1, 2020, https://databank.worldbank.org/reports.aspx?source=world-development-indicators.

Appendix 4. Distribution of the Economically Active Population by Occupation. El Salvador, 1952

Occupation	Distribution	%
Agriculture	412,646	63.2
Industry	74,427	11.4
Construction	18,638	2.9
Commerce	35,823	5.5
Services	77,576	11.9
Others	34,299	2.5
Totals	653,409	100

Source: *Boletín Estadístico. II Epoca* no. 3, (San Salvador, ES: Dirección de Estadística y Censos, 1952):31.

Appendix 5 Distribution of the Economically Active Population by Occupation. El Salvador, 1961

Occupation	Distribution	%
Agriculture	48,6213	60.3
Services	105,194	13
Manufacture	103,477	12.8
Commerce	51,753	6.4
Construction	32,940	4.1
Others (transportation, mining, etc.)	27,515	
Totals	807,092	3.4

Source: *Tercer Censo Nacional de Población 1961*, (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1965): XXIX.

Appendix 6 Distribution of the Economically Active Population by Occupation. El Salvador, 1971

Occupation	Distribution	%
Agriculture	899,908	54
Industry	266,639	16
Services	166,650	10
Commerce	99,989	6
Public administration	66,659	4
Others (transportation, mining, etc.)	166,652	10
Totals	1,666,497	100

Sources: *Cuarto Censo Nacional de Población 1971. Volumen I,* (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1965): XXIX-XXIX., And *Cuarto Censo Nacional de Población 1971. Volumen II,* (San Salvador, ES: Dirección General de Estadística y Censos, 1965): XXII-XXVII.